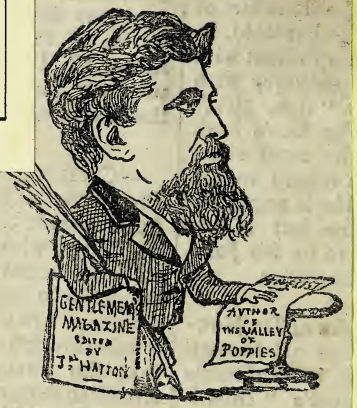
PROVINCIAL PAPERS

BY

JOSEPH HATTON



Joseph Hatton,
A necromancer will beguile you with something Stranger than Fiction, and enchant you to a Valley of Poppies.

J. W. Borden Esq
With the compts of
the author
Joseph P. C. Hatton
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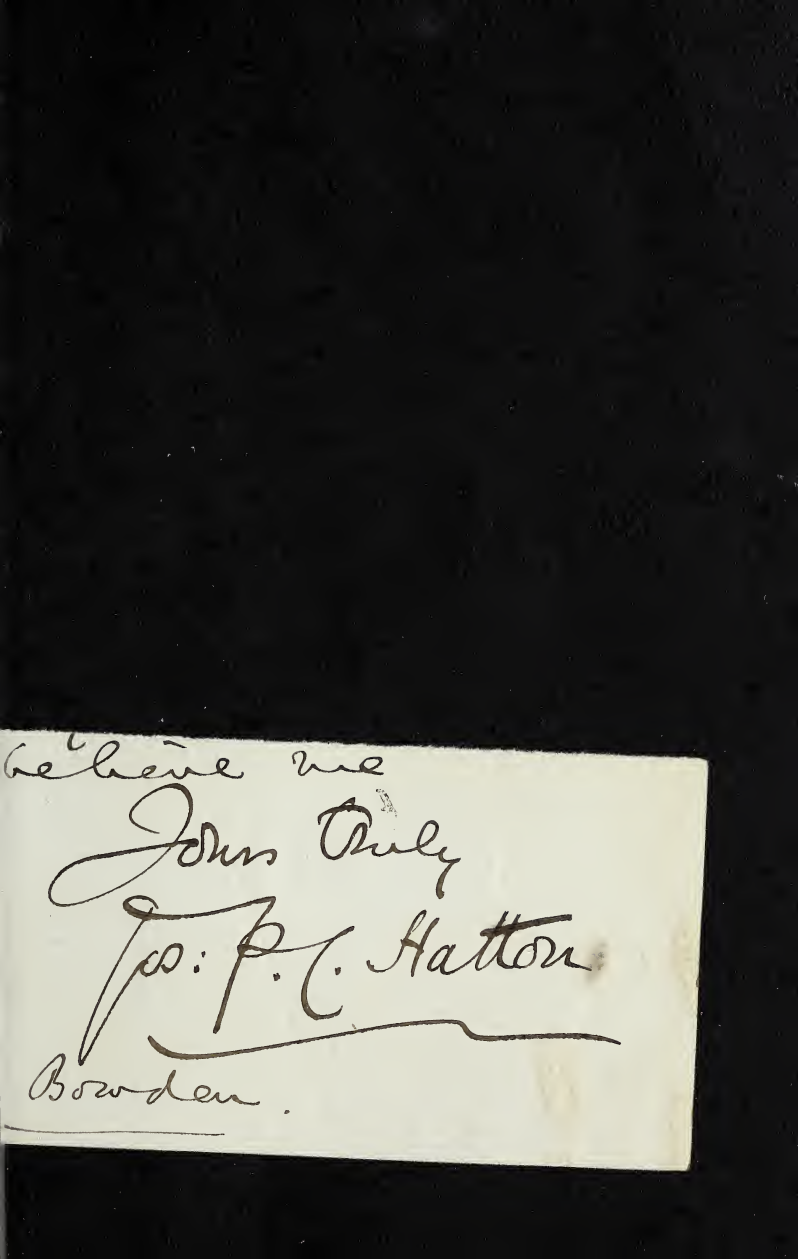
Believe me
Yours Truly
P. C. Hatton
Bowden.

PROVINCIAL PAPERS,

BEING A COLLECTION OF

TALES AND SKETCHES.

BY

JOSEPH HATTON.

LONDON:
W. KENT & CO., PATERNOSTER ROW.
1861.

BRISTOL:

T. D. TAYLOR, PRINTER, MIRROR OFFICE, SMALL STREET.

TO THE READER.

Some of the papers forming this volume have previously appeared in print, and led a vagabond sort of existence, under a variety of guises, in the miscellaneous columns of newspapers, travelling in more than one instance to our colonies, and coming back to me in Cape of Good Hope and Australian mail bags. Others have enjoyed a more limited circulation: these I have fitted with new clothing (some with fresh titles) for longer journeyings. Several of the Tales and Sketches appear now for the first time, making up a collection of papers which have, at least, one merit—they are brief.

Anxious to please, I have naturally my misgivings. I fear that the affection which we all feel for our youthful days has prompted the introduction of one or two papers which are more interesting to myself, as early productions, than they will be to the reader from their own intrinsic merits. There

is one thing certain, if I have been guilty of such a mistake I shall soon hear of it—unpleasant news is a quick traveller.

A great philosopher has said that there was no book so worthless that he could not collect something from it. Colton says he has seen it observed that we should make the same use of a book that the bee does of a flower : she steals sweets from it, but does not injure it. Read me in this spirit, and the frail bark which I now launch, on the sea of literary life, may struggle through the storms, and shoals, and quicksands, it will have to encounter, and induce its author, like a merchant whose first ship has been successful, to despatch another in its wake.

J. H.

Bristol, 1861.

CONTENTS.

MY GOOD ANGEL.

THE dreadful wailings of the maddened sea, the screechings of poor humanity struggling with death in the ocean, ring no longer in my ear, though they echo still in my aching heart. I have been rescued from a mighty gulf, snatched from the brink of the grave. There are flowers climbing up before my window, and soft breezes are rustling the leaves and the blossoms. The cold blasts of Winter have been chased away by the zephyr-breath of Spring, and when the Sun sends his genial messengers to gild my latticed casement, I am permitted to breathe the fragrant air and lift my bruised body from this rural bed of peace.

Am I awake ? Are the horrors of that dreadful night, when we struck upon the fatal rock ; are the succeeding months of pain and pleasure, in this humble cot, but the moving panorama of a dream ? No! it is all reality. The footstep on the stair tells me it is real, and my nurse, though an angel, is a Peri of Earth. Listen to her soft tread! See how that graceful form glides into the whitewashed room, and deposits the health-restoring draughts on the little oak chest under the flower-bedecked window. Hark ! now she speaks, soft

musical words, like the murmurings of the streamlet which I hear at nightfall. "Am I better?" did you ask, my good angel? Who would not be better, in body and in soul, when an angel is his ministering spirit? She is gone! Would that I could kiss even her shadow on the wall!

* * * * *

When the raging fever was at its height; when I fancied myself again battling with the angry billows; when the waters rose mountains high, bearing on their towering summits white foam, like Alpine snows; when the watery avalanches broke, in all their angry might, threatening to engulf me in their dunnest depths; when my brain was on fire, and delirium drove away bodily torture, and shook me in its dreadful grasp; even then I saw that angel face look down upon me with its great blue eyes, bringing transient gleams of Hope (Heaven's best gift to poor humanity) into the vaults of darkness and Despair. And when, in my lucid moments, I fancied that face merely a portion of my wild ravings, My Good Angel came to me, bade me be of good cheer, and "be sure to keep very quiet." Oh! who shall describe the sweet sensation? It was the sunshine of Paradise after the darkness of Hades. Twice was I snatched from the grave; once when rescued from the sea; once when saved from despair and death on a sick bed, by that angel face which came to me with the flowers of Spring and the first dawning of reason after the chaos of fever.

* * * * *

These memories will come back to me, though years have passed away, and Time has pencilled

my hair with grey. I see the flower-wreathed cot in the firelight, and hear the crashing wreck at sea when the wind roars across the commons. The old memories come back in the evening of life ; I read them in the smoke which curls up from my pipe, when the night bird cries in the cornfields.

Blessed are the dispensations of Providence ! In shipwreck and in sorrow I found an angel. The sweet face, which came to me with the flowers, has been mine for many years, and, though it bears marks of change, the voice is still the same—there is the same loving light in the same loving eyes ; and there are more angel faces now to smile upon me when clouds hang about the regions of Hope. Those angel faces are mine, too, and the soft voices call me—Father !

UNCLE JACOB'S STORY.

HAVING retired from public life, laid aside his old legal wig, taken to covering his white head with a bowler hat, and given up the musty atmosphere of close chambers for the free and genial air of a picturesque retreat in the North Midland Counties of England, my Uncle Jacob, like a retired sailor, has become addicted to spinning yarns. Two years ago I threatened that if he again repeated that stock story of his about the mail cart business, I would print it. Now, a short time since I happened to drop in upon the good old soul, and in the evening, when Jane, the housekeeper, was a-bed, my uncle lit his pipe, and wheedled the conversation into the old channel. I could see what was coming, so for the sake of freshening up my memory, that I might put the story in black and white with verbatim faithfulness, I encouraged the retired barrister, who thus related the story of the Crossleton Mail and the attempted robbery:—

"You did not know Christopher Higgleston? Of course not—he lived in your father's time. Well, Chris and I were fellow-clerks, articled to Tweezles and Son, of Crossleton-on-the-Derwent. He was a good-hearted fellow was Chris; but I

never gave him credit for being so thoroughly genuine as he proved himself in the little affair I am going to relate to you.

"One fine, brisk afternoon, in the Spring of 1799, Chris proposed that we should walk as far as Whitherton, a pretty little village, about four miles from Crossleton, for the purpose of gaining some particulars relative to a case we had coming on at the March assizes. We went, did our business, and paid the Plough a visit. A jolly place that Plough Inn was, with its old-fashioned tankards, its prime home-brew'd, its buxom wenches, and its great fire-places. I shall always like that old place, although the warm hearthstone and the cozy company were undoubtedly the means of nearly ruining Christopher Higgleston and your poor old Uncle."

"Never mind, Uncle, you are all right now," I suggested.

"Ah, my boy, so I am, thank God and the law givers. Well, to cut a long story as short as possible, Chris drunk too much of the Plough liquor. We did not start on our journey home until night and darkness had obscured the highway, and made Chris more unsteady than he would have been under ordinary circumstances. Chris had no walking-stick, so he borrowed, "for the fun of the thing," as he said, a besom-handle of no ordinary size I can assure you. Onward we jogged as nicely as could be, but the night seemed to grow darker and darker, until descending Witherton Valley we could not see a yard before nor behind us. I was just associating the dark glen with thoughts of the entrance to Dante's *Inferno*, when

I turned round and saw, far away behind me, two star-like lights, which gradually increased in size. Then the rumbling of wheels were heard, and I knew that the conveyance must be the Crossleton mail. We were half-way down the valley when the mail was entering the top, the lamps looking like two meteors descending upon us in the darkness.

"'What's coming,' asked Chris—'devils or lawyers ?'

"'Neither, my boy. Only a notice of ejectment, which, if neglected, will speedily be executed. We must get out of the road.'

"'The narrow road, Parson Freeman says, is the right road,' replied Chris, 'so I shall not quit it, though I may turn out for—'

"'The mail,' said I.

"'The male! No, I'll not turn out for the best male that ever walked.'

"'It is coming a trifle faster than walking, Chris,' I urged. 'It comes at full gallop.'

"'Full gallop or not, it's a male all the same,' said Chris, merrily; 'and I'll not knock under to a male. To a petticoat I bow, but to a male I stand on my dignity;' and Chris kept in the middle of the road.

"Now Chris was not thoroughly inebriated. He was what they call in this county 'fresh.' He spoke clearly enough, and walked pretty well, but he was very obstinate; so relinquishing his arm, I ran back up the hill to stop the cart, or caution the driver. As soon as I came up with the mail, I shouted, as loud as I could bawl, 'Keep to the right;" but the only reply was a crack of the

whip, a plunge of the horse, and a dash at double speed along the road. I ran after the flying vehicle, but to no purpose. On it went, faster and faster. At last it stopped. The two lamps seemed to jump into the air, and bang! bang! went the reports of a pistol. Then away went the two lights as before, and when the valley had done repeating the bang! bang! of the pistol, the echoes took up the clatter of the horse's measured gallop, and the rumbling of the cart wheels. I was amazed. For a few moments I could not stir from the spot, although I clenched my stick with a grasp of iron. At last I rushed along the road, shouting 'Chris,' until I stumbled over his prostrate form.

"'Good God! what has happened?' I exclaimed.

"'Nothing, nothing,' said Chris, getting up with his formidable staff. 'All right, Jacob, all right.'

"I did not trouble him with any more questions until I had satisfied myself that he was not hurt.

"'I was in the way—the fellow was frightened—took me for a ghost, perhaps, so let off his infernal barkers,' said Chris, now as sober as ever he was in his life.

"With a peculiar sense of alarm I hurried my companion on, and in ten minutes we were at the village of Chawney. Arrived at the turnpike, we were astonished to find about fifty men and boys armed with sticks, the mail cart, with one lamp shattered to pieces, in their midst.

"'Stop! stop!' shouted the mail driver, "Yo need na go no further, lads. Here they are. Thems the chaps!' and rushing towards us, he

presented a pistol at Christopher's head, and charged him to stand. Then the village constable came up.

"'These are th' devils,' said the excited mail driver. 'I charge 'em both wi' attempting to stop th' Queen's mail and troying to rob and murder th' droiver.'

"'Nah, young gentlemen, what's ole this abaht?' said the parish constable, who knew us both.

"'This is what it is all about,' said Chris—'move this vagabond mail driver and his pistol, or I'll smash his ugly head with this stick.'

"'Boi gum, lad, oil shoot thee if tha doesna oud thee tongue and gi thee sen up.'

"Chris raised his stick. The mail driver's finger was on the trigger of a double-barrelled pistol. Another moment, to all appearance, murder or manslaughter would have been committed, when the constable suddenly seized the threatening pistol, and down came Christopher's heavy stick upon the pate of the mail driver. This was nigh creating a general engagement, but the constable—oh! he was a fine fellow was that old parish constable—swore with a terrific solemnity that he would be the death of him who struck the next blow. The mail driver was not to be feared; he was completely stunned and silenced.

"'Now, gentlemen, just come in here and tell us ole abaht it,' said the constable, leading the way. 'The mail man charges yo wi' attemptin' to rob and murder him. One on yo troied to stop him half way up the road, and t'other 'tacked him below, smashing his lamp wi' a great cudgel. He shot at t' one as did that but thinks he missed him.'

"'It was I who struck him,' said Chris. 'My friend has nothing at all to do with the matter, and, as he has somebody expecting him at home and I have not, let him go, for they will be anxious.'

"'But he charges him wi' aidin' and abettin'.'

"'I tell you he had nothing at all to do with it. It happened in this way. I was a little ahead of my friend. The cart came up. One of the shafts was within an ace of my back. Angry at the fool's carelessness, as he must have seen me, and fearing lest he should drive over me, I turned round and struck him. The force of the blow caused me to fall, and it was lucky I could not keep my legs, for in an instant the driver drew up, the horse reared, and a brace of bullets chased each other over my head.'

"'Well, a'ul tell yo what it is; I know yo boath to be real gentlemen and to be innocent. Nevertheless I should be glad if Mester Christopher would spend a noit wi me. I shan't tak him up, but if he stays wi me I'll treat him well, and yo Mester Jacob may go, oletho I doant know whether I'm doin roit to let yo go.'

"Christopher stayed with the parish constable and I went home. The damaged mail cart and the terrified driver were at Crossleton before me; the *Crossleton Guardian* had stopped the press to announce 'A daring attempt at Highway Robbery and Murder—the Royal Crossleton Mail stopped by Highwaymen.'

"The town was all astir with excitement; but I went to bed in peace, somewhat puzzled, nevertheless, in imagining what might be the upshot of the adventure.

" Scarcely had I breakfasted next morning, when the Superintendent of the Crossleton police entered my apartment, ' with the magistrates' compliments, and would Mr. Jacob be good enough to accompany the officer to the office of the magistrates' clerk.' I went, and there found Chris, the parish constable, the mail driver, and several magistrates. One of the latter told us that he was extremely sorry to see two gentlemen of our standing in society in so unpleasant a position ; but however much these feelings might agitate his mind ; indeed, although he might be satisfied of our innocence, still he must, with his brother magistrates, fulfil the duties of his office. ' What makes the case look more serious,' he continued, ' is the fact that last night was the very night upon which, once a month, a large sum of money is despatched by the mail from the bank at Winterton ; that you, Mr. Higgleston, had armed yourself with a dangerous weapon ; that a pistol has been found, on the road where the struggle took place, bearing the initials of you Mr. Jacob ; that the attack was made in the most lonely part of the road ; that you were planted at different points to commit the robbery, if robbery you intended. The broken lamp and the bruised head of the mail driver bear testimony to the fact of an attack having been made upon him, and there are other circumstances which, at any rate, look suspicious.'

" When I heard about my pistol being found I was alarmed. I had lent it to Chris, only the previous day, for the purpose of shooting sparrows, and he had never taken it out of his pocket. The discovery of the pistol, Christopher's big stick, the

lonely spot in the road, the value of the mail driver's cargo, all seemed to form a chain of evidence which appeared to be entwining itself around us with woeful certainty. Oh! what a lesson that taught me regarding circumstantial evidence. Just let me stop to tell you, my boy, that, in all my experience, I have found good come out of everything that has ever happened to me. That instance of the treachery, which may lurk under circumstantial evidence, has saved several of my fellow-creatures from ignominious deaths; for, in my long career at the bar, I have been enabled to snatch more than one or two victims from untimely graves to which circumstantial evidence would have hurried them. It is a fearful thing to stand at the bar of justice, and, conscious of your innocence, see that the evidence is almost conclusive of your guilt. But how much more fearful is it to stand there without influence, without friends, and see every little circumstance caught at and twisted into evidence against you, whilst anything in your favour is coolly overlooked. Ah! my boy, these are sad sights—I have seen them.

"Well, I will not weary you by going further into detail. We were both committed for trial at the assizes, heavy bail, however, being accepted. Poor Chris was dreadfully cut up, and I felt queer, I can assure you. It was indignation at being suspected of dishonesty that sent the hot blood coursing through our veins. I could have annihilated everybody and everything; but I contented myself with doing neither the one nor the other.

"Our case was drawn up and explained in the shape of a sort of petition from the burgesses,

begging the Post-office authorities not to prosecute. All the members for the county were working hard in our behalf, whilst we scorned to say or do anything, one way or the other, beyond explaining the affair to our friends. Despite all this, we were advised to leave the country, and forfeit our bail. But we were determined to let things take their course, except Chris, who actually hinted at making some sort of a confession of his 'guilt' and my innocence, if there was any probability of such a course making me safe. I would not hear of it.

* * * * *

"Weeks passed away, during which time not a stone was left unturned by our friends to stay the prosecution. Two days before the assizes, information reached Crossleton that the case was not to be proceeded with, and that the authorities would take means to publish their conviction of our innocence. The mail driver was proved to be in the habit of getting drunk, and it was shown that he was of a very excitable temperament, and had twice before brought unfounded charges against innocent people. I must say, however, that in this case he had foundation for his charge, innocent as Chris and I were of the dreadful offence imputed to us, and for which we might have been hung—yes, my boy, your poor old uncle's neck was once actually in peril through a singular bit of that peculiarly dangerous evidence which has hung many a man before and since.

"Now often, when I have been telling this tale, some silly people have imagined that I had finished at this point. I have not. When the assizes came

on, I had business there, and went, not to give myself up to the officers of justice, but to give others up. I had not been in court ten minutes before one of the officials asked me if I knew anybody else of my name, and a Christopher ———, of Crossleton. I answered the question, as even barristers are sometimes apt to do, by putting another —'Why?'

"'Because they are to appear to-day to answer the charge of attempting to rob the Crossleton mail, and murder the driver.'

"'Nonsense,' I said, my heart beating quicker than usual. 'The case is quashed—there is no prosecution.'

"'Indeed! We know nothing to the contrary here. I am just filling up the indictment, and if they escape the gallows they'll be transported as sure as they're alive.'

"I never fainted in my life; but I nearly did when this appalling announcement was made. I assured my friend that there must be some mistake. We both went to the Clerk of Arraigns, who, like his brother officer, knew nothing about stopping the prosecution. I was beginning to feel very queer.

"'Oh! stay a minute,' said the Clerk of Arraigns, after a brief pause, 'here are several letters from London, which I have not opened yet. There may be one about this case.'

"And, sure enough, there was. One of the metropolitan dignitaries had neglected to send the information of the withdrawal of the prosecution earlier. I breathed again when I heard the letter

read. But, after all, my official friend, who had been busy on my indictment was right in one sense, if I may be allowed, in my old age, to play with a word—transportation was the result; I *was* transported—with joy!"

SIX OFFICIAL PEN AND INK PICTURES.

I.

Our Model Policeman.

Not to be met with in every street, nor, we may say, in every town, Our Model Policeman is no common individual. His firm step and manly gait are in keeping with his close-fitting and neatly-buttoned coat, and his white gloves are emblematical of the purity of his character. He gives directions to strangers without being disagreeable, and is as deeply impressed with the interrogations of a harmless countryman as he is with the question of a swell—"Haw! policeman, when—haw—does the next—haw—bus—haw—start—haw?" He does not consider it necessary, in order to maintain a character for vigilance, to apprehend two or three harmless individuals during the week. He would sooner prevent a robbery at any time than, for the purpose of making "a case," hide until one is committed. He has a horror of beggars, but cautions them before conducting them to the station-house. A row in one street does not drive him to the next, and he is at a fire before the engines. He has a professional affection for his rattle, but does not consider it necessary to use it

when a chimney is on fire ; neither does he believe in bellowing "Fire!" in a quiet neighbourhood, on learning that smoke has been discovered issuing from certain premises on another policeman's beat, some mile or two distant. He can see a pickpocket in a good coat as well as a "suspicious character" in seedy black ; and he does not charge every individual who is guilty of being poor with "frequenting a certain street for the purpose of committing a felony."

If an unfortunate workman has "taken a drop too much with a friend," and insists upon informing the public generally that he has serious intentions of deserting his home "until daylight does appear," Our Model Policeman persuades the oblivious individual to be quiet, and even accompanies him to the end of the street without giving him a "dig" with his staff as a prelude to the station-house.

Our Model Policeman has a kind heart, and can sympathise with unfortunate children who commit the awful crime of having "no abode nor any visible means of subsistence." He does not accidentally find the area door open whilst the cook in Lansdown-place is at supper, nor does he command every musical itinerant to "move on." In fact, he is rather fond of music, but likes your English musician best. He has a great dislike to German bands, particularly objecting to the clarionet solo parts. Foreigners generally he looks upon with an eye of pity, but he has hardly yet forgiven the Frenchman who one evening applied the "epithet" *gendarme* to him, in conjunction with something about *Parle vous*

Francais? It is a weakness with him to be sincerely attached to England and its language, and the only time, we are informed, that he was really known to lose his temper, was when told by a newly-imported Dutch seaman that "de Dotch vas better as goot as de English, and all mine broders dat vas on de sea vas the best sailors vat vas."

Neither a terror to poverty, nor a very bogie amongst small boys, Our Model Policeman does not make the most fashionable part of his beat the chief scene of his perambulations. He is not addicted to pestering nurse girls with inquisitive hints as to the particular day of the month upon which their "Sunday out" occurs; it can never be charged against him that he is in the habit of straining his brief authority; nor can "invisible blue" be applied to him on the fall of a shower of rain. But you should see Our Model Policeman when he has a case before the magistrates. Then it is that all the good qualities of his nature are most truthfully exhibited, however dull the bench or the public may be in noticing the unostentatious and unsuspecting display of official virtue. Taking an oath solemnly and devoutly, he does not throw the Testament down with as little regard as he would an edition of "Joe Miller." Every prisoner is not known to him "as the associate of thieves," and, unlike many of his cloth, he will not "swear till all is blue." Verily, he is a paragon—the *beau ideal*, the *ne plus ultra* of his profession; but, unfortunately, he is one of a scarce race. May his shadow never grow less!

II.

Our Fast Policeman.

He walks with the air of an officer who "knows a thing or two, raythér," and has no objection to be considered "a downy cove." His whiskers are neatly curled, and the back parting of his hair is as complete as even the most fastidious flunkey could wish. He delights in making every itenerant "move on," and has never been known to let a beggar escape him—if the solicitor of alms happened to be a woman or a child. Rows and fires are his abhorrence. Whilst the former occurrence drives him a mile off, the latter only makes him spring his rattle and alarm everybody, and he generally reaches the scene of the conflagration after the arrival of the engines and fire-escape. If he meets with a man so helplessly drunk that he can neither speak nor resist, Our Fast Policeman "arrests" him for being "drunk and disorderly."

Strangers, who are not exceedingly well dressed, need not anticipate any geographical or topographical assistance from Our Fast Policeman, whose sympathies are only to be moved by the higher classes of society. He is meanly servile to ear trumpets, gold canes, and eye glasses. A lost poodle, or a stray parrot, excites all his sympathies; but a lost child, in a blue pinafore, he takes to the station-house at once, for "wandering abroad and soliciting alms, contrary to the statute in that case

made and provided." To little boys he is as great a terror as hog's fat is to a Sepoy ; and he is very officious to perambulators, when the nurse is unknown to him. In aristocratic localities he twirls a flower between the thumb and forefinger of his white-gloved hand. Always inquisitive as to the contents and destination of butchers' trays, he takes an interest in cooks, and studies the peculiar culinary abilities of each, making their acquaintance by finding the area door open, and suspiciously suggesting, "All right ?" as though he expected to find housebreakers in the neighbourhood, albeit, nothing would frighten him more than a burglar, especially a masked one.

At *fêtes* and galas Our Fast Policeman is a very Boreas for bluster. He is a great man in a thoroughfare where the traffic has been stopped for a few minutes by a crowd ; you may know him by the noise he makes and the way he addresses fustian jackets and boys, his commands, on such occasions, being generally delivered something in this style—"Now, then ! Go a-head ! Move on ! Push along ! Come, be alive ! Stir your stumps !" Like the eccentric fisherman, who was continually engaged in decoying, but never succeeded in entrapping, a certain fascinating perch, the official under review is always after one of the worst thieves in town. He suspects "a party" who frequents a particular market, and means to "keep an eye on him," having "marked him" fully a week ago.

In courts of justice the "silence" of Our Fast Policeman is most menacing, and he is a strenuous opponent to persons entering the gallery at the Assizes without a ticket—or a sixpence. When he

has a little case before the Magistrates, he narrates the particulars with official dignity, and has always experienced great difficulty in taking the prisoner to gaol. Does he know the prisoner ? " Oh, yes," he says, with a mysterious look, " he has seen him afore." Does anyone throw doubt upon a brother officer, Our Fast Policeman can corroborate the statement of the cloth, and will swear the prisoner is the " associate of rogues and vagabonds." He could say " a thing or two," nevertheless, about his superior officers, and entertains an opinion, privately, that he ought to be an Inspector himself. He can make " a case" with the most paltry materials, and is " not particular to a trifle" when he has "kissed the book." He would sooner have a ducking than a magisterial rebuke, but the rebukes of his conscience have been treated with indifference for so long a period, that the inward monitor has grown callous, and allows all sorts of misconduct. Save us from the Fast Policeman !

III.

Our New Policeman.

His clothes are generally a bad fit, and his arms have the appearance of most independent limbs, entirely beyond the control of their owner. He walks awkwardly, and, in turning round, moves like the wooden men in Noah's ark when the children give them a twist with the thumb and finger. The leather stock round his neck is the principal cause of this peculiarity, making him look straight before him. His staff will persist in peeping out of his pocket behind, and his gloves are a serious infringement on the liberty of his hands. He answers questions with a confused air, and detests those sharp-witted youngsters who, thinking aloud behind his back, make suggestions to Bill or Jack about "raw Peelers" and coats that are "a tidy fit—raythe r."

Our New Policeman has considerable doubts as to the proper way of rendering "move on" in the most commanding style, but endeavours to "come it strong" in a crowd. In a row he labours under a fearful excitement, and gives his arms full play, swinging them about like the sails of a windmill. He tries to apprehend the whole of the disturbers of the peace at once, and, meeting with resistance, deals sledge-hammer blows with indiscriminating vigour until he finds himself minus his staff and his senses. Nevertheless, he has always a desire to go into

action for the glory of his profession. He patronises his old companions, and "lets them into a thing or two" over a pot when he is off duty. He takes a pride in his new dignity, and thinks the Superintendent an exceedingly great man—greater even than the Magistrates, although he looks upon the Mayor as next to her Majesty. He is always thinking about the oath he has taken to keep the peace and protect her Majesty's liege subjects. It was a great event that swearing-in business. He never thought to become so important as to be expected to swear (as he told a companion afterwards) "all that ere about Queen Victoria and the peace," and "put his name to it" afterwards in black and white. There was no mistake about it though, and it made him feel exceedingly queer afterwards. He detests the drilling he undergoes in the prison yard before turning out in a morning, and writes his reports with no small anxiety. He gives every information in his power to strangers, and touches his hat to his superiors with becoming modesty.

The first time Our New Policeman had a case before the Magistrates is an event never to be forgotten. Even on the previous day the young officer was all anxiety and nervousness. During the live long night he never slept but once, and then only to dream of the Bench, prisoners at the bar, prosecutors, witnesses, and magisterial rebukes.

Let us picture the eventful morning of his *debût*, when he is called into Court with his prisoner. On being put into the box he is very much confused, drops his hat, and upsets an inkstand. Poor fellow! The spectators grin, and the Superintendent looks daggers at him, whilst

the Inspector pulls his coat and makes some annoying suggestion in his ear. Then, in his official eagerness, he kisses the book before the Magistrates' Clerk has finished the oath, which draws forth a rebuke from the Bench. At last he commences to state his charge against the prisoner, not in the orthodox fashion of "From information I received, &c.," but in a rambling and hesitating manner, appealing to the prisoner as to the truth of his statement, and attempting to reason with him, which elicits sundry other raps on the knuckles.

The case being finished, Our New Policeman is taken to task by the Superintendent, and ridiculed by the cloth in general. But for all this he is fully compensated at the end of the week by seeing his name in print. How well it looks! "P.C. Smith apprehended the prisoner." He buys the paper, and looks at his name with exulting pride. Gradually he becomes better acquainted with his duty, and at last merges, perhaps, into the Model Policeman, but more likely, following the example of the majority, becomes a fast P.C.

IV.

Our Modern County Policeman.

About the official and officious individual who forms the subject of the present picture, there is a peculiar physiognomy, which distinguishes him from the city or borough policeman at a glance. Our Modern County Policeman wears a frock coat, which fits badly, and is seldom brushed. His boots, if cleaned, like himself, seldom shine under any circumstances. His hat is put on carelessly, and he has a slovenly shuffling gait. He carries a stick sometimes, and when out in the green lanes of the country indulges in a pipe. Dull of apprehension, he generally makes a mess of any case with which he is connected, especially if it is a serious matter. A murder, for instance, is itself thrice murdered in his hands, and he never captured a criminal except by some extraordinary accident.

If his beat includes a village, which of course it generally does, Our Modern County Policeman makes himself tolerably disagreeable in the hamlet, being in fact a sort of human, or inhuman, nightmare upon the happiness of the villagers. Does Giles, after a walk amongst his pigs and poultry on a Sunday morning, prevail on the landlord of the *King's Head* to draw a glass of his nut-brown ale, the red-faced host is hauled before the magistrates by Our County Policeman, and poor Giles made to give evidence against him. Is there a village *fête*, Our

County Policeman, in his sombre dress, mars the sport of the villagers, smothering all the rural felicity that was wont to exist, when lasses danced on the village-green, whilst stalwart lads flung aloft the hammer, swung the ringing quoit, or jumped the well-set hurdle. Does a farm-servant, returning from town, where he has been with a load of corn, fall asleep on the road and lose the control of his team, Our Modern County Policeman pounces upon him, like a hawk on an unprotected chicken. He does not caution the offending labourer, tell him that he has committed an offence against the law, and bid him be careful for the future ; but, in a rude, vulgar bluster, inquires the waggoner's name, and either takes him, cart and all, into custody, or summonses him to appear at the next meeting of Magistrates, where a fine is inflicted, and the County Officer rewarded for his vigilance. Is there a cricket-match in the village, Our County Policeman walks about the field with an air of authority, and drinks as much beer as anybody will pay for.

To the Country Squire Our Modern County Policeman touches his hat with servile respect, and the County Magistrate is a king in his eyes, whilst the son of the County Magistrate is a young gentleman to be honoured and obeyed. The Chief Constable, however, is greater than all, for Our County Policeman well knows that if he displeases the head of the force, the humble County Policeman may be dismissed the corps without reason or complaint. Therefore, the Chief receives due homage, for, in the eyes of the force, which he calls "my men," none is greater than he.

As a thief taker, Our Modern County Policeman is, generally speaking, a signal failure, for it frequently happens that unless he is personally acquainted with the thief he will not take him into custody without a warrant, and whilst that document is being obtained the culprit is off; but if the miscreant is known, if he is a villager, or a man not likely to run away, he is generally "taken up" without hesitation. When he serves a summons, Our County Policeman does it in a mysterious manner, frightening some of the unsophisticated country-folk out of their wits. If it was a death-warrant he could not be more serious in its execution.

As a rule Our County Policeman is inferior to the police of large towns and cities; but he thinks himself superior in every respect, much to the disgust of the city policemen. His Inspector, however, has made this clear to his mind by telling him that he is a government officer—one of her Majesty's policemen—not a mere fellow in the hands of a mayor and corporation.

Sometimes you may see Our Modern County Policeman in town. Would you like to know him? If you see a man dressed in dark blue, with a frock coat and leather belt, the ordinary policeman's hat put a little on one side of his head, a pair of badly-fitting trousers falling over thick Blucher boots, an ungloved coarse hand, an uncouth swing of the arms, a twig in his mouth, or a stick in his hand, be sure that is Our Modern County Policeman.

V.

Our Model County Policeman.

We only caught a glimpse of him once, and as we feel a sort of presentiment that we shall never see him again, we feel bound to give the world this little sketch of Our Model County Policeman. He is a well-made, middle-aged man, with a rough but open countenance. His cheeks are ruddy with health, and when he talks to you he looks straight in your face like an honest man. He fits his clothes well, filling out every wrinkle in coat and trousers. His hat shines even more brightly than his boots, but his merry-looking eyes shine brighter than all. He was brought up in the country, and knows it fifty miles round. For ten years he was the borough policeman of a county town. When he resigned his place to take office in the new *corps* he was regretted alike by good and bad, and when his successor, "who knew not Joseph," came, the change was felt most keenly; hardly a night passed without some disturbance, because the new policeman ordered people about in such a disagreeable manner, and apprehended every poor mendicant in the place. Well, times will change! The good borough policeman merged into our Our Model County Policeman, and was entrusted with the care of two villages and a large district close to his old quarters. Since he has occupied his new post he has been a credit to

his new cloth. He walks round his prescribed beat and observes everything. If he encounters a drunken countryman he persuades him to go home, or fetches the "gude housewife" to her drunken partner. He will even assist the unhappy spouse sometimes to put her old man to bed, and the next time he meets the grateful countryman he lectures him soundly for his fault, and tells him how narrowly he has escaped the lock-up.

At village festivals Our Model County Policeman, if called upon to be present, takes such an interest in the rural games that his presence rather stimulates than hinders the rustic joy; the children are actually so bold as to run after him and climb his legs, whilst he pats them on the head and laughs with them till his sides are like to crack. Should the beer, from "over the way," excite some brawling bore to create a row, Our Model County Policeman interferes at once, and, with firmness, quells the storm; or if the *fracas* grows beyond the usual limits of a single fight, the ring-leader is sure to be picked out and taken, be he ever so burly and violent. He has a strong arm has Our Model County Policeman, and a stout heart, too. He would never think of apprehending the least harmless of the brawlers whilst the most violent was present. But it is seldom that he is called upon to do much in that line, for he has a way of managing these little matters more satisfactorily without resorting to staff and "bracelets."

Is a hen roost robbed or a pigeon cote plundered, Our Model County Policeman does not at once pounce upon the first gipsy he sees, but investigates the affair fully, proceeding, even in trivial

cases, with care and caution. He knows something of human nature, and observes the ways of men generally. If he sees one man wantonly ill-use another, or commit a robbery, or if he suspects a man of having committed a serious crime, he does not go creeping a mile or two off, wasting time in getting a warrant, but takes the offender whilst he has the opportunity. He is courteous to all men, and fears none. In an evening he sits at his cottage door and smokes his long clay pipe with a contented relish, and he generally manages to attend church once on a Sunday, walking out with his wife in the afternoon, and nodding to his village friends as he passes by. Is there a case of "'sault and battery" in his district, he does not go to the parties and incite them to take out summonses, but tries to cement the difference. At the sessions, when he has to appear, he gives his evidence truthfully, without insinuating anything against anybody. What he has to say he says fearlessly, and, when he swears, it is with reverence. He is discreet in all his dealings, has tact and judgment, and manages a case with the ability of a lawyer, but with the fairness and justice of an honest man. Such, briefly sketched, is the portrait of Our Model County Policeman.

VI.

Our Parish Constable.

Our last official picture is one of the past. Our Parish Constable has recently ceased to exist. There may be, perhaps, one "outlandish" corner of Britain where he may still live, but, us a rule, he is "gone out." If we had an artist at our elbow we should instruct him to sketch Our Parish Constable labouring under the weight of a monster extinguisher, labelled "County Police Bill." But as we have no such valuable aid, we must e'en make our own poor word-painting sufficient for the purpose.

To our picture then. As we knew Our Parish Constable, he was a kind and genial spirit, who could drink his glass, smoke his pipe, and sing a jovial song in tap-room or bar. He delighted in gaiters and leggings, and often wore a brown coat and an all-rounder. Sometimes he was a large farmer; sometimes he cultivated his snug freehold; sometimes we knew him as a tenant on a small farm, and at others as the proprietor of the village general warehouse, where matches and butter, tape and candles, mousetraps and broadcloth, treacle and lace, black puddings and smock frocks, were all exhibited in one window, and sold at one counter. It was very seldom that he was required to do anything in his capacity of constable, and when he was called upon the call was often in vain—the

duty which he should have performed often neglected. Why should he trouble himself to catch the stealer of neighbour Brown's poultry? Why should he lose his time in chasing a trespasser in search of the squire's game? Why should he take the trouble to go a mile or two from home to catch the vagabond who fired farmer White's stacks? He was never paid for these duties, and, considering that a constable is seldom praised, even if he does a good thing, Our Parish Constable was too fond of himself and his comfortable home to go running about the country endangering his life and ease for nothing. People robbed and fought, and committed all sorts of illegal acts, but Our Parish Constable smoked as many pipes of tobacco and drunk as many pots of beer as usual, and who can blame him?

If Our Parish Constable could attend to a case, without inconveniencing himself, he would do it; but then he generally liked to get his prisoner out of hand as soon as possible. When he did interfere in a village fight he entered into it with vigour, and thoroughly vindicated the authority and honour of his ancient office. Only on special occasions did he put his power into force, and then it was more for the pleasure of showing off a little than to benefit anybody. He was always, however, great at an inquest. To hear him open the "crowner's-quest" was a treat—he could expound the law as well as the first grave-digger in "Hamlet." He had many friends and few enemies. He went to church on Sundays. He never opposed the boyish sport on the Fifth of November, which prompted the kindling of bonfires and the discharge of puny ordnance; he

personally enjoyed the national custom of burning Guy Fawkes. If on the First of November he caught a boy pillaging broken down railings, or chopping up a ricketty fence, a box on the ears would have anticipated the law, and saved the boy's character, as well as the county's money.

If Our Parish Constable did not catch many thieves, or exhibit cleverness as a constable generally, still we have no doubt, had he been stimulated by a good salary, he would have been more active, and in spite of his good heart, fees would, perhaps, have put a few people into gaol who never deserved to be there. "Take him for all in all," he was a respectable, good-natured fellow. He did the state some little service, and, what is more, the state got that little service at a very little cost. In most instances he was a fair-dealing, honest, upright man—what he did, he did as well as he could, and he never pretended to do that which he did not. All honour, then, to Our Parish Constable of the past, and all honour to him wherever he may exist in the present.

EARLY REMEMBRANCES.

PART I.

Childhood.

Yes ! simple were our joys in those bright hours,
Ere minds developed sought a loftier aim,
Young minds, unconscious of their slumbering powers,
Nor dreaming of their future thirst for fame.

Anonymous.

O tell him I have sat these three long hours,
Counting the weary beating of the clock,
Which slowly portioned out the promised time.

Joanna Baillie.

My earliest recollections are of vague and mysterious visits with my father to a carefully trimmed grave ; of a strange and lonely existence in a house surrounded by high walls and drowsy looking garden plots ; of big oak panelled rooms and wide staircases ; of a narrow cot, in a large room, which fancy and nightly visits to the romantic regions of dream-land peopled with hosts of curious visitors ; of a very silent nurse who, when my infant mind would expand itself into joyousness, would sigh and weep over me ; of quiet domestics, who went about the old-fashioned house with a grave and noiseless movement because my father would not be interrupted at his studies.

I well remember the first visit I made from home. My father had been taken seriously ill. Grief and excessive mental exertion had impaired his health

so seriously that his medical adviser had ordered him to bed. The bells were muffled throughout the house, and the adjoining highway was muffled also. Quiet and repose were absolutely necessary to the invalid, and the doctor recommended that I should be taken away into the country until father had recovered.

Whether the sorrow occasioned by my father's serious illness, or the joy at my anticipated trip into the great world, agitated my childish mind most I cannot now venture to decide. But when Dorothy, my nurse, informed me, whilst she smoothed my pillow at night, that I was to go home with her for a week, and that we were to start on the morrow, I slept scarcely a wink for the pleasurable anticipations which the announcement kindled in my juvenile imagination.

I was up with the first ray of sunshine in the morning, and on tiptoe at Dorothy's bedside to see if she had awakened to the fact that day-light was dawning. I remember how anxiously I watched her good-natured face as she lay, with her arms around her head, fast asleep ; how I listened to catch the faintest sound of the church clock ; how I peeped through the half drawn window curtain and saw the red tinge of morning rising behind the distant hills, making the red tiles of the adjacent town glow redder and redder, until I thought of the pillar of fire and the children of Israel, about which Dorothy was very fond of reading to me on Sunday afternoons ; how I wondered what Dorothy's father was like, and if she would go with him to see her mother's gravestone ; how I wondered if everybody had a mother's gravestone, and

if everybody was sorry for it; how all sorts of strange thoughts and fancies flitted through my little brain as I stood with my nose against the window pane watching the break of day, until I was very cold and fain to creep into bed again, determined, however, not to go to sleep, and falling into a sound slumber all the time.

Through the mist which now surrounds these early remembrances, I see Dorothy in a black bonnet and shawl, the latter fastened with a large white anchor, for which she had a great affection, because, as I learnt afterwards, it was a present from an old lover, who, disgusted with an apprenticeship to shoemaking, had taken to the sea as a profession, and was in the habit of writing verses thereon to his "dearest Dorothea," which he generally rhymed with "dearest dear." I can see Dorothy at my bedside assisting me to dress and packing up my little box. I can see her monster trunk, fastened up in sacking, together with her umbrella, parasol, bonnet-box, reticule, worsted bag and knitting needles, all carried to the gate by a red-faced individual, and deposited in the mail-cart for Crossley. I can see myself carried to my dear father's room. I can feel his warm kiss on my cheek, and my warm tears washing it away, and I can feel the transient shadow, thus hovering over me for a moment, flit away in my childish delight at being lifted into the postal conveyance. I can see the cart start, and I can see my father's window-curtain move, and his white face peering out with a melancholy smile upon me. I kiss my hand to him. He is gone, and I can hear the cart-wheels rattling over the hard, echoing road-way.

I see the old-fashioned house of my father grow less in the distance ; the antiquated gables no longer stand out distinctly against the morning sky; the trees around look like a black mass of cloud. The house becomes a mere speck. Now it vanishes in the distance, and I am looking ahead for Dorothy's home and the pleasant time I am to have at Crossley.

Here, courteous reader, is the contrast between Childhood and Maturity. In our younger days we are ever looking forward, rich in hope for the future, our pleasures being in the time to come. When "the time to come" has arrived and we are men, we look back into the past and search for our treasures in memory. Oh! that we brought with us into our manhood more of the pure light of our childish days!

PART II.

My First Journey : Dorothy and the Mail Driver.

Our home is by a woodland side,
  Where beauty ever dwells;
And from the door our eyes can glide
  O'er flowering hills and silent dells.
The young rose through the window peeps,
  Like maid with modest smile;
And through the night in fragrance sleeps,
  And blushes all the while.

Anonymous.

The conveyance in which I made my first excursion into the outer world of Chezzleton (a little borough town in the north of England,) was one which has now all but disappeared from the highways and byeways of old England. It was a comfortable well-to-do cart, capable of carrying five passengers and a driver, besides sundry items of luggage, and was dignified by the title of "The Royal Mail," which appellation it was entitled to by reason of its being the postal cart for Crossley and Chezzleton. Although it had the appearance, at first sight, of an ordinary spring cart, there was something about it which, on inspection, left no doubt that the conveyance was not a mere market or carrier's cart. "In her Majesty's service" shone forth from every board and rivet. "In her Majesty's service" seemed to glimmer about the decently polished axles, and the fact that the cart really was in the service of its Queen and country

radiated about the title, which was emblazoned on the back, to such an extent that there could be no mistaking the conveyance, humble as it otherwise appeared, for an ordinary two-wheeled trap.

Will Tunster, a hale, hearty countryman, who had been a rural postman before the days of locomotives and telegraphs, was the driver. And he was a shrewd fellow, too, was Will, full of topographical facts and curious local information, besides a performer on the bugle and a singer at Crossley church.

Alas! Will and his cart are now both superseded —he by a sharp, short-haired, "horsey" looking individual, and his cart by a red, sugar-loaf shaped, high-wheeled chariot, constructed only to carry the driver and his bags; and for aught I know the old Chezzleton and Crossley mail has descended to the level of an ordinary market cart, or has become the forgotten occupant of a lumber shed.

After sundry stoppages at road-side inns and curious little post-offices; after sundry performances of "Rory O'More" and "Tom Moody" on Will Tunster's bugle, the Royal Mail arrived at Crossley, a sort of half-mining, half-agricultural village, about eight miles from Chezzleton, and equally peculiar in its geological and etymological characteristics.

As we jogged on through the little town we passed long rows of newly-built cottages; red, burly-looking dissenting chapels; beerhouses and inns, identified by large swinging signs; farm-houses, and well-trimmed hay-ricks; shops, with windows temptingly set off with sugar, tape, nutmegs, clogs, currants, mouse-traps, gingerbread,

mops, buckets, Spanish juice, shot bags, marbles, peg-tops, and a variety of other miscellaneous articles. At intervals high chimnies towered above the town, casting long shadows on the house tops, and darkening the sky with rolling clouds of smoke. On one side of the village the blackened fields looked like gigantic cordage manufactories, the coal pits being surmounted with long three-legged erections, supporting a perfect net-work of pit-ropes, which, propelled by steam, ran along their iron rollers with an incessant whirr. Heaps, and heaps, and heaps of coals (enough, my infantile imagination suggested, to last Chezzleton for ever) were piled along the roadside, rising, now and then, into mountains of fuel. Troops of black-visaged miners wended their way along the road to their respective homes in the long rows of houses; whilst in front of the latter crowds of noisy juveniles quarrelled over marbles, to the annoyance of nearly as many boisterous mothers, who fought the battles of their respective offsprings, in language more noticeable for its energy than its refinement.

As the Royal Mail went jogging along, at anything but a masculine pace, through these edifying scenes, I began to be fearful that my visit would not be so pleasant a one as I had imagined. Dorothy, ever watchful, noticed the cloud of apprehension which was settling upon me, and soon dispelled it.

"We are nearly at home now, Master Ralph; but it isn't among th' coal-pits, so thou needn't to be afraid, bless him," she said, giving me an affectionate hug.

"He isn't afraid at coal-pits, I knowa," said Will

Tunster, giving his horse a cut by way of emphasis, and speaking with a broad Derbyshire accent, which, were I to report it literally, would puzzle many of my readers.

"Thou'rt not afraid on 'um, Master Winthorp?"

"No, sir," I replied, fully impressed with the dignity of the driver, and half-inclined, because of his civility, to beg the favour of another tune on the bugle.

"That's reight, moy little mon; thou moant be afraid on 'um, olethough they're not th' noicest things in th' world. Nah that one younder, for instonce, burnt up a hunderd chaps only a month agoa. They cole it foire damp as does it. Well, it may be foire damp or damp foire, but they can't damp t' foire out, when it's once agoin, and it's moy opinion there's summut more in it than some folks think. I've never been doon one on 'um, not I, becos I oleways had a sort of objecshun to 'um, and since I've been to th' institushun, as has started here, and read abaht volcanics and that sort o' thing, it's moy opinion as they sink them pits too deep, and get into th' laver o' foire as is in th' middle at earth, and that's wot they cole foire damp. That's abaht the long and short on't," said Will, evidently satisfied that he had said something very clever.

"Lawks, Mr. Tunster, how you do talk, like a book, I declare," said Dorothy.

"You'd rather I'd talk like a letter, Miss Dorothy Cantrill, care of Christopher Winthorp, Esq., Chezzleton, Derbyshire, England, and if not there, at Mr. Cantrill's, post paid," said Will, holding his whip and ribbons in one hand and

gazing intently into the other, as though reading the superscription of a letter. On pronouncing the last word, he cast a sly intelligible glance at Dorothy, who, instead of making any reply, put the corner of her apron to each eye in succession, and complained of the dusty road. This little subterfuge, however, was without avail, for, by and bye, the great tears rolled down her cheeks, and she sobbed aloud.

And then Will coughed violently and thrashed his horse, but finding that this did not repair the mischief he had done, he turned sharply round upon Dorothy, and, with admirable frankness, begged her pardon in the traditional fashion—a thousand times over—assuring her that he did not mean to hurt her feelings.

Why Dorothy should have cried at all I could not imagine, but I was quite convinced that Mr. Tunster had been guilty of some very gross act of unkindness, and until he had begged Dorothy's pardon a thousand times, (which in my infantile imagination was ample reparation for any offence) Will, despite his musical powers, was, to me, the most odious person in existence.

The little storm blown over, Will commenced to blow his horn with unwonted vigour (but whether the tune was "Rory O'Moore," "Tom Moody," or both, or neither, I believe neither Will nor any other accomplished musician could have decided), and we turned the corner of the road in which the Cantrills resided.

The change in the scenery, as we entered the by-lane, was a singularly striking contrast to that of the adjacent road, being, I have

often thought since, as complete as the difference between Bagdad and the enchanted regions which surrounded that famous city. In place of the black busy scenes we had just left we were now in a quiet rural lane, fringed with hedgerows white with the blossoms of Spring. On one side of the road was a rude stone footpath, by the side of which rippled a stream of clear water, irrigating a numberless variety of cresses; on the other side a long verdant streak of grass stretched away into the distance, where Dorothy's house lay half concealed amidst a cluster of luxuriant trees.

Even now I can remember the sensations of delight that agitated my little mind in the new world which these scenes opened up before me. I remember how I watched the white clouds that floated above us, and wondered how they could be as far off as Dorothy had often told me they were, when I could see their shadows chasing each other over the green and sunny landscape. I can remember the strange mysterious feeling of joy with which I drank in everything with my anxious eyes, and the deep longing I had to gather the buttercups and daisies which shone like stars along the road, and gleamed yellow at the foot of the green and white hedgerows. I remember how my heart throbbed when I was lifted from the mail cart by Dorothy's broadchested father, and kissed by his kind hearted wife. I can remember how quickly the day changed to night, and how, with a sort of unconsciousness brought on by the sudden and total change of scene, I was put to bed and dreamed the sweet dreams which are only dreamt in "our angel childhood."

PART III.

Supplementary : Romance in Humble Life.

It is not in the mountains,
Nor the palaces of pride,
That love will fold his wings up
And rejoicingly abide ;
But in meek and humble natures
His home is ever found,
As the lark that sings in heaven,
Builds its nest upon the ground.
L. Blanchard.

There are homesteads which have witness'd deeds
That battle fields, with all their bannered pomp,
Have little to compare with. Life's great play,
May, so it have an actor great enough,
Be well performed upon a humble stage.
Westland Marston.

Years, many years, had passed away when I returned to these early scenes of infancy. Death had added another dear name to that inscribed on my mother's tomb ; the Cantrills had "rested from their labours," and "little Ralph" was the father of a family. As I passed along the old highway which I had travelled with Dorothy and Will Tunster, everything seemed strangely altered in size. The trees, the coal heaps, the cottages, all had become dwarfed—the hills which my infantile mind had exaggerated into mountains, seemed to have dwindled into mere mole heaps. Yet all were like old friends to me save where fresh creations

had risen up to despoil the peculiar character of the picture. The house of the Cantrills was still nestling among the trees, as though it formed part and parcel of the troop of leafy giants.

It was evening, and as I neared the house faint sounds of a bugle, warbling the sporting echoings in "Tom Moody," fell upon my ear—a voice from the days of childhood penetrating the mists of the past, and carrying me back with mysterious alacrity to days strewed with the bright flowers of infancy. Nothing will sooner rouse into sudden activity reminiscences of the past than the repetition of a strain of music familiar to us in our early days, and identified as it were with some particular epoch of our life. Well does the poet describe this sweet sensation in an apostrophy to music :—

> "Mysterious keeper of the key
> That opes the gates of memory,
> Oft in thy wildest, simplest strain,
> We live o'er years of bliss again!
>
> The sun-bright hopes of early youth,
> Live in its first deep hour of truth,
> And dreams of life's delightful morn,
> Are on thy seraph pinions borne!"

I felt the force of the poesy most acutely. In one quick rush of memory my first trip into the outer world of Chezzleton passed before my mind, a panorama of yesterday viewed from the hill-top of to-day.

I found Will Tunster still hale and hearty, though verging upon the allotted age of fourscore years and ten, sitting on a bench in the garden, amusing himself with his time honoured bugle, breathing through its good old crooks the airs

with which he had once made the welkin ring. Dorothy, in a great white cap and apron, with a handkerchief pinned over her shoulders, sat close by knitting with matronly gravity. An old sheep-dog lay asleep at the threshold of the house; a great white cat sat lazily watching a blackbird, which was singing a solemn strain on an adjacent bush; and a kitten was playing with a ball of worsted that had fallen from the old woman's knee.

It needed no explanation to make me understand that Dorothy was Mrs. Tunster. Poor old soul, she had grown almost absurdly like good old Will, who, in his turn, had the very manner and carriage of Dorothy.

I need not go into the details of my reception. It was hearty, ingenuous, and affecting, celebrated with tears and laughter.

At a fitting opportunity, when Will was gone out to do a "bit of carpentering," I rallied old Dorothy about her unfaithfulness to her sailor-boy.

"Ah! moy lad," said Dorothy solemnly, "it's a long tale, and a rayther foggy un at my toime o' loife to look back to. But there's no knowin' what we're born to do and see. To think o' Ralph Winthorp, who I know'd and nursed when he wor no more nor the height o' sixpennorth a hapence, bein' a feyther, and me being a grandmother, and boath comin' together agean as if it wor to wish each other God speed afore old Dorothy is laid wi' her poor old mother i' th' churchyard!"

"Now, now, your getting mournful, when I wanted you to be merry and tell me all about the sailor, and how Will made Dorothy Cantrill Mrs. Tunster."

"Yes, yes, we are loike to get a bit soberer as we get older, Mister Winthorp, and I donnat see but why its only reight we should. We ma say th' same things as we've said as little uns, but we say um wi' more weight as it were—solemer like. Nah my mester, he plays th' same tunes he used to play when I wor a little wench, but there's not so much loife in um now—they sound more feeling loike, as if they'd had troubles loike us, and gett'n quieter than they used to be. Poor Will, he's been a good husband to me, and a good feyther to his children."

I could not get Dorothy to enter into any explanation about her early love; but I learnt in the neighbourhood, before I left it, the history of her marriage, about which there is a halo of social romance which might be spun into a volume, though the heroine be but a simple country girl.

During the time that Will was persecuting Dorothy with his unwelcome attentions, the sailor-boy, referred to in my earlier chapters, ceased to fan the flame of my nurse's love with his graphic and characteristic epistles. Month after month, year after year, passed away, and no letter came to Crossley from the runaway apprentice until everybody concluded that he was dead. In these years of suspense Will Tunster became Dorothy's friend and adviser, and when her father and mother were laid in the earth, poor Will seemed to be the only soul to whom she could look for protection; so eventually they were married. A year after their union the village apprentice returned, rich with prize money, to make Dorothy his wife. Poor girl! The trial was great, but she bore it with all the strength and fortitude of a wife and a woman. The

lover of her girlhood would have carried her off, but she resisted his temptations. Will Tunster, honest hearted Will, would have given her up, but the woman having become the wife, was not to be shaken in her honour and integrity.

"I loved thee once, moy lad, and tha knows it; but nah and for iver, except as a friend, thou'rt as dead to me as I thought thee when I stood i' our oud parish church and bound mysen, for weal and for woe, to Will Tunster, th' mail driver o' Crossley."

Nevertheless, there was long afterwards a shadow upon the spirit of Dorothy; but she was a true wife to Will, combatting and conquering what she regarded as the unlawful bent of her affection towards her early love as boldly and as fervently as a great titled lady, the heroine of a three volume novel, might have done. Humbly, patiently, and with enduring fortitude, did the good soul strive to forget the past, and love, honour, and obey him who had sworn to love and cherish her. In the end, principle triumphed over passion, and Dorothy came to respect her husband; and as the duties of the mother succeeded to the duties of the wife, a higher and a holier feeling took the place of respect, and Will Tunster was beloved of Dorothy his wife.

TWO PICTURES OF ONE TRIP.

No. I.

"Take you to the Chepstow Flower Show on Tuesday? Of course I will, my dear," said Mr. Charles Constance to his little wife, as they sat at breakfast one bright Summer morning.

"I would rather not go if you cannot spare the time, Charley," responded Clara, putting a lump of snow-white sugar into his coffee.

"I can manage it, my pet, and as I have won a trifle on the Derby, I can afford you a new bonnet, too," replied Charley, laughing.

"But —." "There, no more buts, my dear, we'll go to Chepstow, so get everything ready and say no more about it," said Charley, chucking his wife under the chin.

Such was the manner of the engagement made by Mr. Charles Constance, of Bristol, to take Mrs. Charles Constance to one of the celebrated Chepstow Flower Shows, and Charles thus describes the trip:—

It was a jolly day. The sun shone out gloriously. The Hotwells was in a tremendous bustle when we got there, at about eight o'clock. The steamer was crammed with people, and, for some time, I really thought I should not be able to get Clara a seat. "A falling drop at last will cave a stone," somebody says. It is a good motto to remember when patience and perseverance are required. I thought on it, persevered, and at last

both my wife and myself were seated. We had not long to wait before the *Wye* was steaming down the river Avon. There was a little quadrille band on board, and the musicians began to play as the boat commenced to ply. Vincent's rocks and Leigh woods seemed to rush by us as we went, and the steamer made great shadows on the river's bank as she bounded joyously along. The water was rather muddy, of course, but in the distance, with the sunbeams upon it, the rolling tide shone and sparkled like molten silver.

As we passed Cook's Folly, an old building on the Clifton heights overlooking the river, I told Clara, for the tenth time, all about the legend connected with the ruin ; how, in times gone by, Mr. Cook, a wealthy man, had a son, of whom it was predicted that he would meet with a fatal calamity when he was in his twenty-first year ; how this tower was erected by the anxious father to preserve his child from harm ; how the son and heir lived there, attended by a faithful servant, until he was just entering his twenty-first year ; how food and fuel were conveyed to him by means of a pulley basket ; how the last night he had to be left in his lonely apartment a bundle of fagots were conveyed to him as usual, and in which bundle a viper had concealed itself; how this viper stung him; and how, on the next morning, instead of being borne out amidst triumphant shouts, his dead body was carried forth amidst weeping and wailing. Clara, as usual, was almost inclined to shed a tear at this painful recital, but I called her attention to something else, and she was soon as merry as ever.

We made a comparatively rapid passage, and there were hundreds of people to see the steamer arrive at Chepstow. A band came alongside and played a tune whilst we landed, and when we got ashore we found a friend amongst the visitors. As the Flower Show is merely an excuse for the excursion, I proposed a trip to Tintern Abbey and the Wyndcliff: agreed to at once. We made our way to the Beaufort Arms, procured a fly, ordered dinner for four o'clock, packed up some sandwiches, and off we started. I never saw such scenery. The more I see it the more I like it. Those beautiful sweeps of rock and woodland, tier above tier! The Wyndcliff rearing its head against the blue sky! The river Wye winding through the valley, now creeping slowly along, and now bounding over the pebbles and making picturesque weirs! The distant glimpses of the Severn, dotted with "white winged craft!" The indescribable beauty of the whole scene sent me into raptures. Clara was delighted. Our friend grew poetic. Our driver, an Irishman, said it was as "illigant as Ould Ireland itself, and shure nothing ever bate the ould counthry yet."

"It is like fairy-land," said Clara.

The thought presented a fitting opportunity for a quotation—"Kingsley says, 'Wherever is love and loyalty, great purposes, and lofty souls, even though in a hovel or mine, there is fairy-land,'" I replied.

"If love and loyalty make it, then we have a fairy-land at home," whispered Clara, with an affectionate smile, as the old abbey merged from behind the trees ahead.

"What a beautiful sight!" exclaimed Clara.

"And what a magnificent site" (spelling the word), said our friend from the box, satisfied with his bit of play upon the word.

"I hope its many a toime yet ye'll sight it, yer 'onner," chimed in our Irish coachman, as he flourished his whip harmlessly over the horse, and bade it "come up, my jewel."

On arriving at the Abbey we rambled over the ruin and looked at it from every point of view. We bought a printed guide, and Clara had a chat with the old man who shows the building. The venerable guide (I mean the man not the book) thought Tintern ought to be the first illustration in the book. Being of the same opinion, Clara established herself in his favour at once, and he told her the legend about the founding of the Abbey. We discussed our sandwiches in a secluded part of the ruin, and discussed the legend at the same time. Clara had no doubt about the truthfulness of the story. I would fain believe the legend for the sake of the extra charm it gave to the Abbey; but our friend, a bit of an antiquary, would not allow us to take it all for granted. It had its effect, notwithstanding, and imagination soon peopled the ivy-clad ruins with shadows of the past. The 'daws made their antiquated cries above us. A gentle breeze rustled the leaves of the ivy which clung to the mouldering stones. Green grass grew where cowled monks once paced over ornamented pavements. Sunbeams came streaming through crumbling walls. Broken columns and ruined carvings lay at our feet—

"Would they had tongues the deeds of yore to tell!"

exclaimed our friend, commencing a stanza of Lushington's, which I forget. The train of thought, however, which it suggested was of the past, with its dark tales of war and terror, tyranny and tears. Each of us conjured up pictures of probable occurrences within the gloomy walls, where "hoary Time sits on his throne of ruins."

When we had finished our sandwiches and almost exhausted our theme, we started back again to Chepstow. There were several dashing vehicles on the road, and our friend feed our Irish coachman to give everything the go-bye, which he did in capital style. When he had made a dash and passed a trap, he would, at a convenient distance, quietly turn himself round and perform sundry bits of pantomime with the forefinger of his right hand to invite those behind to mend their pace. The challenges were accepted in several instances, but Pat "bate them all intirely," and we were soon at our chosen hostelry again. Then we went to the Flower Show, admired every thing and everybody, walked about Chepstow Castle, amongst the ruins of which the show is held, listened to the music of the military band, spoke to several friends, and returned to a capital dinner. Having washed down our repast with some excellent claret, my friend and myself smoked a cigar whilst Clara dressed, and then we started again for the steamer and Bristol. We had a good deal of pushing and crowding to get aboard. The packet was overladen. Everybody was complaining. The *Fairy Queen*, it was said, had left a number of her passengers behind, and in addition to the

hundreds she brought down, the *Wye* had to take these back. We made ourselves as comfortable as we could under the circumstances, and the steamer started amidst the cheers of a large concourse of people assembled to witness her departure.

Another immense crowd greeted us at Bristol, and after a deal of trouble in endeavouring to get a cab, we lost our friend, and had to walk home. This was a little annoying, but the nice cup of tea and "frizzle," which awaited us at home, relished better for the walk. The baby was brought to be kissed. The cat came rubbing its sides against my legs. Clara handed me my slippers, and we both came to the happy conclusion that we had had a delightful trip, and had spent a most agreeable day.

No. II.

"You know I hate trips," said Mr. James Grumpington to his wife, the other morning, in reply to a question about the Chepstow Flower Show.

"But you promised to take me months ago, and I have prepared for it, and, what is more, I mean to go, so there," responded the wife, who had purchased a large amount of finery for the occasion.

"Well, I'll see, I'll see; don't get prating about what you'll do and what you won't do; just put some sugar in my tea, and see if those eggs will ever be ready," said Grumpington, diving his thumb into a letter just brought by the postman.

His request complied with, Mrs. Grumpington followed up the attack. "I only wish you to say whether you will go or not; weeks ago you told me you would take me; but, of course, you don't care about breaking your word—oh, no!—nor about taking your wife out for the slightest breath of fresh air, though she should die for it, shut up, like a nun, in this close place," continued Mrs. Grumpington, bursting into tears, by way of *finale.*

"There, there, be quiet, do; I suppose there'll be no peace if you don't go; I'll take you: but mind, Mrs. Grumpington, I'll not be dragged about the confounded place like a spooney out for a day,

mincing and staring about, with exclamations of 'charming!' 'beautiful!' and such like, at every touch and turn ; I hate it."

Such was the introduction to the trip of the Grumpingtons to Chepstow, on the day that our friends, mentioned in the former sketch, were there ; and the following is Grumpington's account of the excursion :—

The day was awfully hot, and I had to get up an hour earlier than usual. I had to wait for Mrs. G. and bolt a blazing breakfast in consequence. When we got to the starting point the steamer was full of people. I had forgotten what they called the confounded thing, and asked a fellow, with wide trousers dangling about his legs, the name of the packet. "Why the *Wye*," said the fool, with a grin at his horrible pun, and a leer at me through an eye-glass. I'd have all such puppies whipped daily, had I my way! Mrs. G. was in a stew because I couldn't get her a seat. "Was there ever anything like it," she said, as she tried to make her way through a complicated mass of knees belonging to people who were seated. I could see she was getting into one of her fits, and as I hate a scene in public, I did my best to get her a seat, and succeeded. Just as she had sat down, a fat old woman and a dingy female, of an uncertain age, crammed themselves down beside her, crushed her bonnet, and made her cast appalling glances towards me. I couldn't pitch into women before a boat-load of people, so I turned my head and took no further notice. After a while one of the she-nuisances moved, and Sarah seemed more satisfied. When we started, a trumpeter, a harp

player, and another fellow commenced kicking up a row, playing against time, as though the chattering of the passengers, the bawling of the captain, the splashing of the water, and the hissing of the engine, did not make enough disturbance to distract anybody. A lot of women sat next to where I stood, and they began talking about the "charming scenery," of course.

"That's where Charlotte Pugsley was murdered," said one.

"Ah, poor thing," added a second, "she has gone to her last account."

"She has know'd what it is to suffer for her misplaced love; ah! we are sadly misused and prosecuted, we poor women, that we be," chimed in a sort of Sairey Gamp, the mother of a girl in muslin and curls.

"But did you never hear of the origin about that place," she continued, pointing to the building called Cook's Folly.

Perhaps not the correct one, was the reply.

"Ah, it's a melancholy legendry I can tell 'e," said the ugly old woman, doling forth one of the most stupid tales of nonsense I ever heard.

I soon moved from this quarter, but, there, it was as bad everywhere. I tried to get into a chat with a rather respectable looking man, who, I thought, might have come there against his inclination, about Italian affairs and the funds, but I found him a noodle, full of nothing but trips and excursions, so I tried to resign myself to the day's calamity. There was one good thing I had an excuse for not sitting next my wife; I could not get near her. She is a woman, however, and soon

made herself at home with sundry members of her sex.

We got to Chepstow at last, and passed under the substantial-looking bridge, designed by Brunel, called by sentimental stupids ungraceful, because it is not full of curves and fancy work. I say it's a good solid affair, just such a bridge as it ought to be. As the steamer neared the landing place another set of noisy musicians came alongside, and began blowing away in opposition to the other set on board. How I should liked to have sunk the musical maniacs and their instruments too!

We got ashore at last, and just as I and my wife were fairly under weigh and bound for the Beaufort, that jackanapes, Bates, came up. He had come over alone, he said, and was just looking out to join some party in a drive. He should like to go to Tintern.

"Shall we go there, my dear?" said Mrs. G. Of course I did not refuse; it would have been useless if I had; so we started.

On the way, Bates talked a good deal about the influence of scenery on the mind, and uttered no end of twaddle borrowed from poets and madmen. I said as little as possible. The scenery was all very well, I dare say, for those who like it; but the sun was blazing hot, and the dust blew about in all directions. We sat behind an old hack of a horse that crept along, and let every trumpery shopman drive past us, and to mend matters, the driver, a chattering fool, pulled up every now and then, to show us what he called the chief "points" on the road. To hear him speak of the road put me in mind of the fifty pounds Bates let me in

for on the Derby, and the remembrance of it did not at all contribute to my enjoyment.

When we got to Tintern we paid our shillings (at least, I did), and entered. There were lots of people strolling about, and making comments on the scene, reading "sermons in stones," as Bates said. Did they read the sermons they might have read? that's the question. Not they! "The past, the glorious past," was their theme, of course. They talked of it as though the days of priestly tyranny and feudal dictation were things to be admired. The abbey was a grand monument of former days, sanctified by the lapse of ages, and all that sort of thing. But the boobies could not read, in the rotten stones, the history of a rotten system of tyrannical dictation, priestly rapacity, bloodshed, robbery, and murder. They could not see, in the monument, as they called it, a proof that systems formed contrary to law and justice will not stand. Oh, no! they only saw what they term the poetry of it. I like the prose myself, and here one had it sternly enough, for under one's feet were deposited the bones and ashes of the very men who made and carried out the bad system, with their big house crumbling about them. Near the centre of the building lay a stone knight—with his great ugly head and blunted sword—shorn of his legs, and rotting to pieces over the grave of some wretched old monk, who had once, no doubt, spent a very jolly life, living on the fat of the land, grinding down the poor, and confessing the women. Beautiful poetry though, no doubt, if one could only see it. As I happen to wear a beard, in which

Sarah says there are a few grey hairs, but which statement I do not believe, Bates suggested that I should form a capital accessory to the scene if cowled and hooded and set to pace the cloisters. Very witty, certainly ! A bystander laughed, but I could not see the joke.

The guide to the abbey, or the showman, or whatever he may be called, came and told us an awful lot of rubbish about its erection and endowment. According to his story a feudal customer, named De Clare, a regular Blue Beard, married, by her father's consent, but against her own, a pretty woman called Eva. They could not agree, it appears, like a good many other people in the present day. "Incompatibility of temperament" is the modern term for the complaint. Well, De Clare "put her away," in the *poetic* fashion of those days, by murdering her, as he had done many others. Mrs. Eva, however, appeared to him at night in her coffin garments ("a *grave* sight," said that fool Bates), and bothered him and his Father Confessor. To settle the spirit, the priest advised De Clare to turn Pilgrim Crusader (murder on a large scale), and build an abbey or a church. De Clare, thinking this would give him first-class accommodation in the world to come, did so, and built Tintern Abbey. That's the *poetry* of the past!

We went back to Chepstow at last. Everybody passed us on the road. On our arrival we went to the Flower Show : more poetry and more romance —the "noble ruins of the Castle," "beautiful flowers," &c. But, after all, it was only an exhibition of women and millinery, an excuse for a lot

of vain-minded people to get together and show themselves off in their best clothes. A wretched band murdered several good compositions whilst we were there ; I thought the drumming was tolerably good, if noise was all that was aimed at. There were a few nice flowers and vegetables ; but as I like to see the former growing and the latter cooked, I did not care much about them.

From the Castle, we went to the hotel, grubbed in a hurry, amongst heaps of others, drank wine quite warm, and then nearly broke our necks in hurrying to the packet.

The vessel was crammed in every part ; no seat again. We had hundreds of passengers more than we ought to have had. There was bad management fore and aft. I had no sooner got aboard than the excitement and bustle nearly knocked Sarah up. I thought she would faint, so hurried off for water. There was a most disgusting pushing and crowding near the cabin, and in attempting to descend into this den of close air and tobacco smoke, I caught my foot in the protruding garments of a fashionably-dressed female and fell headlong down stairs, upsetting a porter with three brandies and sodas, and causing considerable merriment to everybody in the neighbourhood. Of course my misfortune amused them. They were out for fun, determined to enjoy themselves, and had I killed myself they would have laughed. Fortunately the porter was stout (Bates sneered at this expression when I was describing my mishap, and charged me with an attempt at punning, the scoundrel!) and I was not much hurt. In the meantime, as I learnt afterwards, they heard the

shout and the crash on deck. Sarah had seen me fall down ; a nervous woman near her said somebody had fallen overboard ; Sarah thought I was the victim, and I only appeared on deck just in time to prevent hysterics and heaven knows what besides.

All the way home the pushing and crowding continued. Sarah's clothes, which I shall find cost me a pretty penny when the bill comes in, were spoiled, and I never spent a more miserable day in my life. I think of bringing an action against the owners of the *Wye* for the value of Mrs. G.'s attire.

When we got to the Hotwells hundreds of people were there to see us come in. I had my corns trampled on in fighting a way through them. I couldn't get a cab when I had done so, and all the drivers were saucy. We had to walk home, and Mrs. G., who is no small body, nearly broke my arm in leaning on it to rest her "wearied limbs." When we reached home the children were squalling, there was neither tea nor supper ready, Mrs. G. blew up the servants ; I banged the doors and swore—yes, I swore—I would never go out for another "pleasure excursion," by land or by water, so long as I lived.

LOOKING BACK.

What's past, and what's to come, is strew'd with husks,
The formless ruin of oblivion. *Shakspeare.*

The velocity with which time flies is infinite, as is most apparent to those who look back. *Seneca.*

Time, with its mighty strides, will soon reach another generation, and leave the present in death and forgetfulness behind it.
Dr. Chalmers.

As mimic clouds passing over the deep, Memory wafts the shadows of the past over the heart. One by one they disappear—a mournful procession of blighted hopes and mis-spent hours. How vividly Memory recalls to one's mind the little winding brook in whose limpid waves we dabbled our tiny hands, or watched the speckled trout basking in the sunbeams which swam upon the gilded waters. As it did when we knew its shaded nooks and moss-covered pebbles, the little stream still glides on its way to the boundless ocean, and loses itself in the foaming surge. Like that little stream we, too, are hurrying on to the great, unfathomable sea of eternity.

Like pearls scattered upon the sands of time, bathed in the light of a summer's day, are the bygone hours of boyish dreams and childhood's poetic imaginings, recalled after years of worldly toil. How gratefully the murmurings of the past fall upon the fainting soul! How sweetly the recollections of our early love strike upon the chords of our affections, echoing their deep,

melodious strains through the corridors of the heart! The daisy-speckled slopes and sunny flowers of our childhood are before us once more. We rejoice in the sunbeams of Memory, revel in "the light of other days." What would we not give for one year's real life in the past, with all its cares and sorrows; its false "friendships;" its tears and its troubles, so that its joyous moments, verdant spots in the desert, still lent their charms to existence.

* * * *

Now I am not a blind worshipper of the past, nor an enthusiastic admirer of things that are gone, merely because they are dead and have no resurrection. I am not one of the class who think that our forefathers were more sagacious and better men than exist in the present day. I am not an admirer of every bygone custom and institution of bygone days, although I like many of them. Nevertheless, I am fond of looking back into the past, even unto days before I was born, not only for information, but for amusement and pleasure. I like to look down the long vista of departed years; to speculate upon the relics of former ages, and make pictures of the days that are swallowed up in the sea of eternity. To converse with antiquity (without going into very technical details) always affords me peculiar pleasure, and when sojourning for a short time in Wales there was one particular locality in which I always felt my inclination to look back irresistibly strong. The scene of my contemplations was the peninsula of Gower, and when on its breezy downs and amongst its sea-beaten rocks, I confess to a continual

looking back. Happily, however, I was not solely governed by the past, and, consequently, never found myself in the position of Lot's wife—crystalised in the act of looking backwards: such being the punishment, according to a modern writer, reserved for all guilty of the crime just mentioned.

Glancing, the other day, over Mr. Cliffe's excellent guide to South Wales, and perusing his notice of Gower, I was reminded of a few thoughts and pictures of the past, which had formerly caused me a good deal of pleasure and wiled away many an hour. I therefore sat down, and thus committed them to writing, for the benefit of those who, like myself, may have a weakness for looking back.

Gower, an extensive tract of land running out, in rugged peaks and cliffs, into the Bristol Channel, is one of those secluded districts which generally repay investigation. Shut out from the world, the modern railway train has never penetrated into the sunshine and shadow of Gower. The locality is even destitute of high roads, its scenery retaining much of the native wildness which characterised it even in the British times when the Druids performed their curious rites and ceremonies there. The coast is indented by charming little bays, which so wonderfully combine the beautiful and the sublime that the mind is fascinated and almost lost in its magnificent wildness and seclusion. All along the coast the sea has formed, amidst the rocks, innumerable caverns, into which the tide ebbs and flows, making music, *ad infinitum*, with the shining shells and pebbles.

I have often stood on the edge of a cliff, and watching the antagonistic power of water, looked back, imagining pictures of the accumulation of the spoils of the land, which have been carried into the bed of the ocean by rivers, waves, and currents, and again brought to the surface elements of new islands and continents, where men, investigating the organic remains of the strata, might trace the nature of the countries whence the spoils were derived. By way of illustration I have then glanced out to sea, where the little islands of the Bristol channel seemed peeping through the mists to tell me that they were thus formed. But for material provocative of speculation, geological and otherwise, the Bone Caves of Paviland furnish abundance of curious facts and fancies. They are pronounced to be the most remarkable caverns in Britain. In front of a lofty cliff of limestone they face the sea near Rhosilly, and are accessible only at low water. From the land side they are invisible. Both caves are evidently branches of some larger cavern which may have been cut away by the denudation which formed the present cliffs. They are only about a hundred yards apart, and if both were continued and extended towards the sea they would meet and intersect each other. The caves were long known to the farmers and fishermen in the vicinity before they attracted public attention. About forty years ago the curate and surgeon of a neighbouring village, whilst enjoying a ramble in the neighbourhood, penetrated the cavern known as Goat's Hole, where they found two molar teeth of an elephant and a part of a large carved tusk. They exhibited these curiosities,

which attracted other explorers, who found similar bones and carried them away. In 1832, Dr. Buckland, with Mr. Dillwyn, a gentleman who represented Swansea in Parliament for many years, visited the spot together, and I am indebted to Dr. Buckland's *Reliquiæ Diluvianæ*, and to Mr. Cliffe's book, for the materials for most of the facts contained in this description of the two wonders of Gower.

The floor of Goat's Hole, which is covered with a diluvial loam of a reddish yellow colour, ascends rapidly. The loam is mixed with angular fragments of limestone and broken calcereous spar, interspersed with recent sea shells and with teeth and bones of the elephant, rhinoceros, bear, hyæna, wolf, fox, horse, ox, deer (of two or three species), water-rats, sheep, birds, and man. A portion of an elephant's tusk was found, which measured nearly two feet, and Dr. Buckland also found fragments of charcoal, and a small flint, the edges of which had been chipped off, as if by striking a light. At the interior extremity the recent shells and bones of birds are most abundant, and the earthy mass containing them are cemented to a firm brecchia by stalagmite. This is almost the only point in the cave where stalagmite or stalagtite occurs. The entire mass through which the bones are dispersed had every appearance of having been disturbed by ancient diggings, by which the antediluvian remains were mixed with recent shells and bones common to the adjacent shore. There seems to be no evidence to shew that the cave was ever occupied as an antediluvian den. The bones discovered, many of which I have examined in the museum of

South Wales, appear to be perfect. In the caverns in the Mendip Hills, in Somersetshire, you may find, side by side, the powerful jaw of the hyæna and the cracked bones of the ox and deer, bearing the marks of teeth, and showing conclusive evidence that the animals were carried into the wild beasts' lair, and there devoured. Nothing of that sort has been discovered in the Goat's Hole, which appears only to have been a mausoleum for the dead, unless the human race, in ancient times, made it also a retreat for the living. The human remains, found at a distance of only six inches beneath the surface of the floor, consisted of nearly the entire left side of a female skeleton. It is difficult to account for the removal of part of the skeleton, as the remainder did not appear to have been disturbed by the previous operations. The bones were enveloped in a coating of a kind of raddle, composed of what is called red micaceous oxide of iron. Near the body were a number of ivory rods, nearly cylindrical, and varying from a quarter of an inch to four inches in length. They were cut into a variety of forms, one resembling a human tongue, and others in the shape of rings, armlets, and skewers. A wolf's toe was moulded into the form of a skewer. All these, with a quantity of small yellow shells, of the *nerita littoralis*, as conchologists would say, were found close to the skeleton, just as such things occur in graves and sepulchral remains of early times. Immediately above the cave the remains of a British camp existed, and this seems to throw some light on the character of the woman, and the period when she existed, which was, probably, anterior or coeval

with the Roman invasion of this country. The antediluvian bones first, and then the remains of charcoal, human food, and human bones, indicate two successive occupations of the cavern at periods long distant from each other.

What a history of the past is here inscribed in Nature's chronicle of creation! Here we may look back for ages. Here is a clue to lead through the darkness, and illuminate the valley of death and oblivion. And what a beautiful theme for the poet is there in that poor crumbling skeleton. Let us picture it as it may have existed in life—a sorceress, perhaps, dwelling in that solitary cave amidst the remains of a former world, from which she fashioned her bone and ivory ornaments. There, perchance, she practised her harmless witcheries, and reclined on her bed of skins. It may be that she had her thoughts and fancies about the wondrous occupants of the cavern which lived prior to her existence, even as I have my thoughts upon her mysterious history. It was a wonderful residence that lonely cavern; and how singularly picturesque must have been the appearance of the sibyl in her fantastic and scanty attire! Imagine her at the entrance of her rocky home. There she stands with her grotesque and fanciful bracelets and ivory decorations, her large black eyes drinking in the beauties of the scenery around, or watching the progress of the carving of some toy fashioned by her own hands from the antediluvian relics around her. At her feet lie the *debris* of past generations; before her the fretful waves, in perpetual motion, wash the shore, leaving behind their marine deposits, and carrying off spoils in return; above her the

ancient Britons sit around their camp fires, or prepare to do battle on their foes. All—save the sea, "on whose brow Time makes no wrinkles"—have now passed away, subject to perpetual mutation. The weird woman has come to the same complexion as the bones out of which she constructed her toys and trinkets. There, in that solitary cave, she lived, there she died, and there was she laid to rest, with her beads and ivory bars, her white armlets and bone needles.

Thus Time rolls on its ceaseless course of change. Our morrows soon become long, long past yesterdays, lighting "fools the way to dusty death." But God has written the history of the past, not in tablets of wax, nor on perishable parchment, but on the rocks of ages, that he who thinks may read. Nature is ever repairing the ruins caused by this process of decay. When the beds of the existing seas shall be elevated above the waters, and covered with woods and forests—when the deltas of our rivers shall be converted into fertile tracts, and become the sites of towns and cities—we cannot doubt that in the materials extracted for their edifices, the then existing races of mankind will discover indelible records of the physical history of our times, long after all traces of those stupendous works, upon which we vainly attempt to confer immortality, shall have disappeared. *

The second cave is very similar to the first, both in size, form, and position. It is closed in on every side with solid rock, excepting the mouth,

* Mantel.

which is open to the sea. Towards the inner extremity, and upwards also to the roof, it contracts and terminates, as it were, in a vein, that is still filled with calcareous spar. The floor is nearly thirty feet above the sea; it is more horizontal than the Goat's Hole, and, being within the reach of the highest storm-waves, it is strewed over, to the depth of a foot, with a bed of small pebbles. Underneath these is a bed of the same argillaceous loam and fragments of limestone, as in the other cave, and a still more abundant accumulation of animal remains, which may now, notwithstanding the quantities which have been carried away, be found embedded in the loam. Ancient coins, too, are found in both caverns.

There are more theories than one for accounting for bone caverns, and explaining how and by what means they became filled with the remains of such a variety of animals. Mantel's appears to be the most reasonable one. The caverns are evidently mere rents or fissures in the limestone rocks, and have been filled with drift while submerged in shallow water, and the carcasses of land animals have been floated in by the subaqueous currents. The bones, though broken, are rarely water-worn, and the fragments even retain their sharp edges. The bones must, therefore, have been protected, more or less, by muscles and skin; the freshness of some of these fully supports this proposition. This, then, proves that these animals, some of which are of monstrous proportions, lived in this part of the world; but there is abundant evidence, far stronger than this, to show that our wastes and forests were once inhabited by extinct herbivora and carnivora,

belonging to genera of which the recent species are almost entirely restricted to southern climates; and, at the present time, the only living representatives of the three families of carnivora, which swarmed these latitudes during the Mammoth period, are the fox of the dog tribe, the wild-cat of the feline order, and the badger of the bear tribe. Thus, in every step of our progress, the grand law of nature —alternate decay and renovation—is exemplified. The work of destruction—whether in torrid climes, in rocks, in verdant plains, by the agency of heat or cold, by inundations of the ocean, or by volcanic eruptions—is always going on. On the other hand, amidst all these processes of decay and desolation, perpetual renovation is ever apparent. But to proceed with the theory of the caves. Before the elevation of the land, these fissures were raised above the water and gradually drained. In the meantime, the period of formation of stalactite commenced from the percolation of water through limestone. Before the formation of the floor of stalagmite some of the tribes of Briton may have occasionally sought shelter there, and that will account for the finding of their implements or instruments, which, if left in the cave, would soon sink into the ossiferous mud and become sealed up. Then, afterwards, as regards Goat's Hole, it may have become the habitation of man, or the solitary home of her whose bones were found mingled with the remains of many a departed year.

* JONAS THE HUNCHBACK.

CHAP. I.

Revery and Burglary.

It was a dull dreary night when I arrived in the thriving seaport of ———, where I had obtained a short engagement on a newspaper in the capacity of a reporter. Knowing my love of the picturesque and of the beautiful, a friend had procured me lodgings in a very interesting part of the town, whence, from my bedroom window, I could see the ivy-clad ruins of an old castle, which, like most of its class, bore the unmistakable marks of Cromwellian destruction. It was nearly midnight when I sought my bedchamber. I could not sleep, but sat musing, with my head between the blind and the window, upon the dim prospect without, which the moon was struggling to illuminate.

All was quiet and still as death until the chimes of the old parish church commenced the most impressive and sweetest bell music I ever heard break in upon the silence of night. "Home,

* When the evils of the ticket-of-leave system were becoming so painfully apparent a year or two ago, I published an adventure, founded upon fact, as an illustration of what was generally regarded as a great legislative mistake in the criminal jurisprudence of the country. With some slight revision, I venture again to reproduce the story of "Jonas the Hunchback," hoping that even now it may possess features of interest.

sweet Home," was the melody. To those who are fond of music old familiar tunes come back, after many years, attended by a train of events and occurrences which seem to re-enact themselves before the vision of memory. As the music rose and fell upon the night wind, I saw the family hearth at home with its cluster of youth and age around the winter fire ; I heard the tinkling of the old piano, and the choral accompaniment to its uncertain tones. I was once more at " Home, sweet Home."

The last sound of the bells had scarcely died away when the quietude was again startled ; this time by a cry of distress. Instinctively I seized the shutter-bar and stood in montionless doubt, wondering where I was and what had happened. A repetition of the scream roused me. The sound came from the adjoining house. I rushed out at the back and there met a man, who, though I saw him but for a moment, in the solitary gleam of an adjacent gas-lamp, I can never forget. I was struck a severe blow, which for a few short minutes rendered me unconscious. Soon I heard many voices in earnest talk about the house, and the household was speedily alarmed. A daring burglary had been committed by men who carried torches. Happily nobody was injured, but unfortunately the thieves had escaped.

In the excitement of the moment I could hardly satisfy myself whether I had been struck by the villain I meet at the back of the house, or had run against some obtruding building, so I said nothing about what I had seen, but made the best of my way to the police station.

The moon was completely obscured by dark, heavy clouds, from which fell a thick, drizzling mist. Scarcely a footfall was heard along the quiet streets. By and bye, I came into a narrow, dreary lane, populated by that class of persons whom you find in seaport towns, living by their wits, or by the lack of wit in others ; men and women who are to be found in the company of seafaring men and quay labourers. Even in this locality all was dark and silent and without signs of life, save in one single instance. From an attic window in the roof of one of these wretched habitations of misery gleamed a sickly light, which stole out into the night like a thief creeping forth under the shadow of darkness.

When opposite the house in which I had noticed the light, I was suddenly confronted by that same form which I doubted not had recognised me once before on that same eventful night. For a moment I hardly knew what course to take. Flight first suggested itself, and then I was tempted by fear to cry "murder." But I remained quiet, notwithstanding. I was soon conscious of something like cold steel being threateningly flashed before my eyes, and that kept me motionless.

"You will not be hurt ; you need raise no alarm ; I am neither going to rob or molest you," said my particularly ugly friend, "but as you know me, and may probably give me into custody, I wish to make friends with you."

"Then let me go" I said.

"Not until I have had a few words with you in private. Follow me ; I need your assistance : come into the house," said the burglar, with singularly striking earnestness.

I hesitated and felt very much inclined to cry for assistance.

At last, in mad desperation, thrusting a pistol into my hand, my strange companion said, "There, I give you the means to defend ycurself. Kill *me* if you like, but pray follow me first and rescue from starvation a dying woman."

"Lead on," I cried—striking, I believe, a most theatrical attitude,—and the creaking door closed upon a reporter and a burglar.

CHAP. II.

THE HUNCHBACK'S HOME, AND THE HUNCHBACK'S STORY.

With my strange companion I ascended a rickety staircase, and entered a poor dismal apartment. On a bed of straw, upon the floor, lay a wretched, emaciated woman, to all appearances drifting out, a sad wreck of humanity, into the mysterious sea of eternity. The wind moaned in the cold chimney, and the rain pattered against the paper-patched window. A monster spider lay dead upon the once white cloth which covered the bed of the invalid; a rushlight glimmered and flickered faintly in the centre of the room; and, whilst I stood gazing at the sad woeful picture, a half-starved moth fluttered lazily into the cheerless light, and fell buzzing upon the floor. An empty medicine bottle and a leaden spoon lay near the head of the bed on one side, and a broken plate and basin on the other, but all were empty.

The poor woman raised her head as we entered, but motioned as though we had disturbed her.

"My sister would sleep," said the burglar; "we will not awaken her now."

Beckoning me into a lower room, my companion, saying he had good reason for telling me what he would now relate, gave me his history, which was, nearly word for word, as follows.

My father and mother were respectable people, and lived not far from the town of Manchester. They were poor, but honest. I was their first child, and, as you see, deformed. I had two brothers and a sister. My brothers died young; and, when I was ten years of age, my father died, and my mother was compelled to go into the Union. The change in life, the cruel treatment of Union officials, and the loss of her husband, so distressed her that she died in six months afterwards, and left myself and sister orphans.

My sister, two years younger than myself, got a situation as housemaid, and was fed and clothed by her master and mistress. I, nobody would employ. My deformity made people look upon me with repugnance. I had no companions. The boys all scoffed at me, and called me humpback. I tried to get employment, but in vain, and was at last taken into the Union. There I was taught to read and write by the schoolmaster, an old man who, it was said, had saved a good deal of money. Not even amongst the paupers had I a friend, and I felt myself a despised, lonely, worthless being. As years went on, a sort of revengeful feeling took possession of me, and I hated all mankind as my enemies.

When I reached the age of sixteen I was made to work in the workhouse grounds, and at eighteen I was entrusted with many little duties. At about this time I felt a desire to leave the Union, and did so, but no one would employ me, and consequently I fell into the company of thieves, and people who laughed when work was spoken of as a means of subsistence. I nursed my hate, and

determined to have revenge upon my fellows for the way they had, all of them, treated me. I robbed and plundered with my new companions. I was an adept at picking pockets, quick to learn anything vicious, bad, and wicked. I became a burglar, and an object of suspicion to the police.

"One night one of my companions, a man much older than myself, proposed that we should rob the Union, and possess ourselves of the stored up treasure of the schoolmaster. I agreed, and at ten o'clock, one dark night in November, ten years ago, we started on our unlawful expedition, armed with picklocks, skeleton keys, a dark lantern, and a couple of bludgeons. We did not carry firearms, for we were not steeped so far in guilt as to contemplate murder, although the desperation, to which the scoffs of society had excited me, sometimes made me feel as fiendish as I look.

"At about twelve o'clock that night the rain fell in torrents, and you could not see a yard before you. We reached the workhouse. I knew every turn in the building. Sleep had taken possession of every body—pauper and freeman. We obtained admittance to the place, and by means of a dark lantern found our way along the corridors and passages. We heard the hard breathing of many, and several times lay down flat on our bellies, for some minutes, hardly daring to breathe, for fear of waking the sleepers. We reached the schoolmaster's room—the door was locked, but I soon turned the slender bolt, and entered the room and closed the door. My heart beat with a wild excitement. The old man was fast asleep, and his grey hair hung over his wrinkled forehead.

We peered into a cupboard, where we found a small box, which, I believed, contained cash, but we were determined to open a chest of drawers close to the bedside of the schoolmaster. Whilst we were doing so the old man awoke, and rose up in his bed to make an alarm. He put forth his hand to seize the bell-pull, but I fell upon him and prevented such a catastrophe. He tried to shout, but I smothered his cries, although I refrained from hurting him. In a whisper I told him to be still, or he would be killed. For some moments he was quiet; we opened the drawer; we obtained the coveted treasure, about a hundred pounds, and were making off with it when the old man cried "help!" It was the most unfortunate word he ever uttered. My companion immediately struck him on the head a blow that shattered the old man's skull, and bespattered the bed and ourselves with blood. Never shall I forget the sight; never shall I forget the sigh the old man gave. The noise was heard, and the alarm given. We tried to escape through the window. I, knowing the place, got out safely, and, clinging to the spouting, got well to the ground; but my companion, missing his hold, fell, and was impaled upon the railings, where, in the morning, he was found quite dead, pierced by six iron spikes—a horrible sight.

"I got away, but in a few days was apprehended, and sworn to as one of the burglars by the schoolmaster, just before he died from the effects of the blow. I was tried, and sentenced to be hanged. I confessed, and related all the circumstances. The day before I was to have suffered death

my sentence was commuted to transportation for life.

For ten years afterwards I endured, in Van Dieman's Land, the horrors of transportation. At the end of that time, for good conduct, I obtained a ticket-of-leave, and came back to England, with the full intention of seeking an honest livelihood. I came back to the scenes of my boyhood, and found that my sister, in consequence of my crime, had been discarded by every body. In a state of misery, she had been lured to vicious habits, had become an outcast from society, and four days ago I found her as you now see her. I applied for work, to enable me to relieve her. At one place I got work for a day; but the police, finding out who I was, and thinking it their duty to inform my employer, I was discharged, and now there is not the slightest chance of my being employed. The other night I thought she would die. I could get no work, so I tried my hand at the old game, and had just failed to get my sister relief, when you came, full cry, and in my fright and frenzy I knocked you down. Knowing that you saw me in the light of that infernal gas lamp, I determined to obtain this interview with you, because to-morrow I intend, at the weekly meeting of the Board of Guardians, to apply for relief, and there is no other soul who can obstruct me but you.

It was certainly very like what the lawyers call compounding a felony, to allow the fellow to escape thus, but there was such a vein of sadness running through his melancholy story, that I immediately assured him I would aid rather than obstruct him

in his design. Moreover, I promised I would never give information concerning that night's failure in his old line of business, and, permitting him to shake my hand freely, I left him, determined that his sister should not die without an effort being made to save her, even though the gift of life might not be worth her having.

CHAP. III.

RECORDS A WORKHOUSE INCIDENT, AND CONCLUDES THE STORY OF JONAS THE HUNCHBACK.

Although the most ingenious sophistry might fail in anything like a defence of the criminal life of Jonas, the natural instincts of humanity excite some sympathy for his misfortunes. Thrown upon the wide, tempestuous world at an early age, without parents, without friends, in abject poverty, it was hardly likely that he should grow up a pattern of virtue, or a model of morality. His natural imperfection, his ugly hump, seemed to cast him without the pale of every pleasure. Our street boys, who exist amongst the most complicated scenes of filth and degradation, have their childish enjoyments. Be their amusement ever so barbarous, it excites the loud hearty laugh of youth, which is none the less merry, though it come from the descendant of a beggar or the heir to a kingdom. But even boys, as poor and as ragged as Jonas himself, seemed to shun the Hunchback. Like a shoal of dolphins hunting the harpoon struck fish of their own species, they made the wretched lad a prey to his own infirmity, until the heart became hard and the mind a blank, save for the reception of malicious thoughts, and dark, moody, sullen wickedness.

Crime grows like a noxious weed, and soon chokes the flowers that bloomed and flourished before the seed of the wild straggler came to kill and destroy. By one sin Jonas was soon seduced to another, until his life became one of infamy.

At last, the Hunchback is caught in his trespasses against the law of the land. Offended justice decrees his punishment. The prisoner bends before the lash, and suffers its keenest castigation. Eventually the law is satisfied, and the penal settlement gives up its chastened exile. Once more Jonas returns to his native land (with a certificate of his good behaviour as a convict), but only to find that sins committed against Society and the Law, are sins which are hard to be forgiven, though Society prays every day "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us."

Not content with crushing the criminal under its iron heel, Society cast down with him an unoffending sister. This was the worst of all punishment, it seemed, to Jonas; for there is a well-spring of love in every heart, of which the weeds of the darkest life cannot altogether stop the flowing.

The morning found the suffering woman still alive, thanks to the kind offices of a surgeon and a nurse, I had been enabled to secure for her, and at ten o'clock I was at the Union, anxious to see the scene about to be enacted there.

The Guardians of the Poor, great in their official dignity, were assembled to discuss the management of the establishment, and dole forth relief to suffering humanity. Around the hard, cold, nail-studded door hovered a host of wretched applicants for the scanty crumbs

which were expected to fall from the national table. The shivering outcast in her gaudy rags, starving despite her sacrifices of virtue and all that ennobles woman ; the hardened drunkard, trembling in palsied sottishness ; the poor slave of a lazy husband and a helpless family; the unfortunate labourer out of work and out of luck ; the ruined tradesman, turned tramp; the aged, the maimed, the orphan, the fatherless : a motley crew of misery, with its multifarious history of distress and wretchedness.

A murmur ran through the mendicant crowd as " Jonas the Hunchback" entered the long avenue which led to the Union-house. The old porter at the gate shrugged his shoulders and frowned as Jonas passed the portal. The lordly overseer shrunk back even from the contamination of the convict's shadow. The very beggar crowd gave way for the burglar, as though he had been an evil thing which even they were glad to avoid. On went the determined, scowling vagabond, straight into the reception-room, where the mendicants were ushered, in turn, prior to making their appearance before the awful tribunal of their fellow-men in the adjoining apartment.

The announcement of the Hunchback's return to the Union created a sensation in the Board-room. The murder of the schoolmaster, with all its horrible details, presented itself to the minds of the Board, many of whom believed firmly in the Hunchback's guilt. The chairman, a hard, wiry, misanthropical scarecrow, who had saved the Union large sums of money by his keen, searching dealings with the relief cases, proposed that the reporters of the press should not take notice of the

remarks he was about to make upon this case. A daring monitor of public opinion, however, heedless of the arbitrary motion, went on with increased alacrity at his hieroglyphical employment, and when appealed to by the Board generally (who wanted to oppose the burglar, but dared not, fearing that if he saw their remarks in the local prints he might pay them a midnight visit), declared his intention of using his own discretion with regard to what he published, and not submitting to anything like dictation from a Guardian of the Poor.

Whilst this new phase of business was developing itself, the Hunchback, tired of waiting, burst into the sacred precincts of the great Poor-Law Legislature. There was a dead silence immediately he presented himself. He did not ask for relief with the cringing humiliation of the other mendicants, but boldly demanded it as a right for a dying woman. One intrepid Guardian rose from his seat to oppose the application, on the ground of the applicant's bad character, but a malicious, revengeful stare, full of the intensest hatred, made the gallant gentleman resume his seat ere he had scarcely commenced his speech.

The burglar described his present position, produced his ticket of leave, and finally exclaimed with a wild energy that almost made him eloquent—"There are bounds which must be set to a man's misery; I make this last trial at living honestly; my sister must be saved; she shall be saved; money and food must be had; for God's sake let it be had by fair means."

Relief was granted, and before I left the town a charitable gentleman of influence headed a

subscription, to enable Jonas and his sister to leave the neighbourhood and commence a little business in some distant town.

* * * * * *

A year ago Jonas was a thriving tradesman, in a small way, in the south of England, and his sister, a fine, handsome woman (strange are the freaks of nature) was the wife of a sergeant of police.

A STORM ON THE HOUSE-TOPS.

The window of our sleeping apartment looks out amongst a perfect forest of chimneys and old-fashioned gables, where the Genius of Antiquity might find a fitting dwelling-place. Nothing, however, half so poetic is ever to be seen in this dingy locality, the midnight echoes of which are only awakened by the screams of a tribe of cats, or the whistling of the wind round the quaint old gables.

The city is fast asleep. The first grey streaks in the horizon denote the advent of another day. Spring seems to have assumed her genial sway, and a grateful shower of rain comes pattering against our window pane, and creating all sorts of comfortable sensations. We fall asleep, and dream of blue skies, green fields and daisies, laughing streams and budding hedgerows, and a thousand other things appertaining to beauteous Spring. But what is that which beats against the house and patters on the roof? We raise our head and listen. The wind rumbles in the chimney, the window rattles. The rain is roaring down the spouts and draining from the eaves in large heavy drops, which go splashing on the roof below, pelting against the house and twittering in the chimney. We can hear the Spirit

of the Wind, like a monster going about seeking whom he may destroy, banging our neighbour's outer door, which creeks and wheezes on its crazy old hinges as if it had an asthma. The mysterious presence rushes by our window, swinging back our shutter as it goes, and sweeping round the corner with increasing rage, taking a tile off a neighbouring house, and depositing it with a crash in an adjoining court.

And now another element joins in the fray, which seems to be a struggle between Winter and Spring. The rain has ceased, and in its stead large round hailstones in white clouds go hissing and clattering into every corner, like a storm of shot-corns into a doomed rookery. Hurrah for the rollicking madcap wind! Away go the hailstones over chimney and house-top. Away they go, helter-skelter before the driving wind, which increases in strength every minute, as though it strove to get out of a locality in which it seems "cabined, cribbed, confined." It whistles round the tottering chimney-pots, until one close by us can hold on to bricks and mortar no longer, and down it goes crashing over the tiles, and frightening a muffled-up watchman as much as if it were a burglar. Scarcely has it reached the street, over the front of the house, when thunder, and red, glaring, garish lightning join in the fray and shake the very earth. All the elements are at war with each other.

We peep forth into the storm. It is a sight for Quasimodo himself. Bristling up amongst a host of shining chimney-pots, some, on the swivel principle, throwing about their great awkward arms as

if in very despair, a hundred gable roofs cluster together under the mysterious morning sky. Loud roars the wind amongst the old timbers. Hail, and snow, and sleet, and rain rush to and fro in hazy clouds, which look like affrighted ghosts amongst the gaunt chimney stacks. From roof to roof the gleaming lightning flies, revealing the mysteries of many an old corner, and glaring into a thousand chamber windows on a thousand terrified dreamers. Away clatters a loosened tile over our heads, dashing, crashing, clattering, rattling, over the slanting house-tops. The swivel chimney, belonging to the lawyers' offices hard by, turns round its black head with a scream, and the lightning conductor of its taller neighbour trembles like a reed.

Louder still old Boreas pipes to war. Far over the seas he is gathering his forces, and now they come roaring along, sweeping through the air, carrying away the spout in wet, rotten, tattered strips under our very nose, and giving the chimney with two arms such a tremendous bang that the swivel spins round like a maniac, and off goes the top of the lightning conductor like a gigantic dragon fly, which, after several evolutions in the air, alights somewhere in the wet regions below.

Again the thunder rents the encumbered air, and the lightning flits over the shining roofs until it touches the vane of a distant steeple, where it glimmers for a moment and then is lost in cloudland.

THE MIDNIGHT MARCH.

A FAIRY TALE FOR A VOLUNTEER'S FIRESIDE.*

It was a clear, frosty evening, as I sat, at my little parlour window, gazing into one of Bristol's quietest streets, after the exciting duties of a day's drill. The fire burnt up bravely, sending a ruddy glow around the room, making my rifle look more formidable in its accustomed corner, and my glossy belt to shine with a borrowed radiance. I felt stronger as I looked at my accoutrements, and was conscious of a feeling of pride when I remembered that the crimson scarf, upon which lay my little foraging cap, had been presented to me because I was the most efficient man in my company.

"And won't I try for the firing prizes when the time comes," I mentally ejaculated. "And won't you be foremost in defence of your country," my heart seemed to say in reply, as a thousand heroic sentiments flashed across my brain. Picturing the fight, in all its appalling grandeur, I saw myself

* First published in 1859.

striking a strong blow for home and fatherland, and a Peri waiting to catch the last ruddy drop shed in so glorious a cause, as her passport to the Regions of Light.

I know not how long I sat ruminating in this manner, but my fire was nearly out, when I was suddenly aroused by a strange sense of alarm. I looked into the cold, quiet street. What a change had taken place since I looked there before! Men and boys were hurrying along the road, all in the same direction, bearing weapons of various descriptions, including guns, pistols, hatchets, pokers, sticks, clubs, crowbars, and iron in as many shapes and varieties as if half the marine-store shops in the city had been ransacked to arm the mighty throng. Bells were ringing in the most discordant manner, and the sound of trumpets was mingled with the cries and shouts of the people. My astonishment was so great that for some minutes I could neither move nor speak. I stood gazing in a sort of trance, paralysed, like some poor bird under the fascinating eye of a serpent. Still the crowd poured on, in one unbroken stream, and the bells rang out, unceasingly, their dreadful music. Above all shone the pale-faced moon, and a few stray shadowy clouds sailed quietly along the illumined expanse of sky, contrasting strangely with the busy scene below.

At length strains of martial music came wandering through the air, accompanied by the measured beat of drums and the shrill notes of trumpets. Onwards went the motley crowd of men and boys, rich and poor, employer and employed, merchant and trader, tradesman and tramp. Louder still became

the music, increasing every moment, until the "British Grenadiers" burst upon my ear, and the band of the Rifle Corps turned the corner of the street below. The Colonel and the Major, mounted on a pair of fine, thick-limbed chargers, were at their head, and a standard bearer, carrying one of the city banners, preceded the band-master, who was beating time—not with a mahogany baton—but with a glittering sword, that flashed in the moonlight like a flaming meteor. Every musician wore his new sword, and I was astonished to observe that in most of their belts, where I had that same day noticed gloves and music, were formidable revolvers. The members of the band not only seemed to play better, but they marched with more care and firmness than usually characterised their movements.

Next came the regiment, their bayonets fixed, and each man's face wearing an expression as threatening and as dangerous as the long rows of polished steel above them. There was no talking in the ranks; not a word did any man whisper to his neighbour. The officers marched with drawn swords, and some had rifles slung to their shoulders.

It was not long before I saw the first rank of my own company, and not until then did I feel either able to move or speak. When I saw my brave comrades, however, a change came over me. The hot blood coursed through my veins; my heart thumped against my breast like a dissatisfied prisoner beating against the bars of his prison-house. I was in the midst of my companions in a moment, and onward we went—

tramp, tramp, tramp—to the echoing strains of the band.

Although prepared for the worst, it was some time ere I had the courage to ask one of my comrades the meaning of this midnight demonstration. I was about to make the inquiry, when the man next me whispered in my ear, "We shall meet them near Cook's Folly. It will be hand to hand work, and we shall drive them over the rocks."

"Amen," I said, for I felt that the invader had come.

"They are mostly Zouaves and Algerines," continued my comrade. "Not one must escape us, for the sake of our wives and sweethearts."

"By God, and our willing arms, they shall not," I cried, as I thought of my blue-eyed little Milly.

"Amen," solemnly exclaimed my companion, just as the signal "Halt" was given, and the music ceased.

We were on the edge of Clifton Down, when our commander, in an impassioned speech, full of loyalty and patriotism, informed us that some hours ago a French fleet was seen steaming up the Channel towards Bristol. It had been ascertained that on board were large bodies of troops, principally Zouaves and Algerines, the most ferocious men in the French army, and that their object was to invade this part of the country at various points. A message had been despatched to Portsmouth for the Channel Fleet, but it was feared that the Frenchmen had gained a victory at sea, and by this time had effected a landing near the Lighthouse at Shirehampton. "If so, my comrades and

fellow-citizens," continued our leader, "we must drive them back into the Channel. It is for your Queen and country; for your wives and families; for the honour and safety of old Bristol, that you are now called upon to fight. Strike home, my friends, and let our watchword be—'Bristol to the rescue!' March!"

"Hurrah! Hurrah! Bristol to the rescue," shouted ten thousand voices, and onward moved the Volunteers.

At a given signal, the crowd which I had noticed preceding the regiment, fell back on either side, and we marched through the avenue thus formed, amidst deafening applause.

Arrived fairly in the middle of the Down, we were halted again, whilst scouts were sent out to reconnoitre. In the meantime, the officers held a council of war, and we quietly waited their instructions.

The Down was covered with a thick hoar frost, and everything around was so still that I could hear the footsteps of the skirmishers scrunching over the white rime, until the men looked like black spots against the midnight horizon. How my heart beat as they disappeared! How refreshing was the cold breeze to my burning cheek! How slow seemed the arrival of the time when I should meet the foe, and strike for Bristol, my Queen, and my Milly!

"But where is Milly?" I thought, and thought aloud, for my fellow Sergeant told me she was with the other women.

"What women, Sergeant: where are they, then?" I inquired.

"Some in the Squares; some in the Council-

House ; some in the Guildhall ; some in the Exchange ; some in College Green ; some in the Cathedral ; some in the Broadmead Rooms, with guards of specials, lumpers, peelers, and all sorts, armed to the teeth, and the men will fight like devils, if needs be," my companion replied.

" Then what could I have been doing, to hear nothing of it ? asleep, I suppose," I said to myself, with an inward determination to make up for my laziness.

The halt had lasted about half-an-hour, and the whole regiment was growing excessively fidgety that the scouts did not return. It was feared that they might have fallen into some ambush, and the signal to march was just about to be given, when the sky in the direction of the Channel was suddenly illuminated with a brilliant light, and a radiant car, drawn by a team of sea-horses, came slowly through the air. In shape the car was like unto a mighty shell of pearl. Around it was a beautiful halo of many colours, reflected back in the glistening chariot. The horses wore trappings of gold, and the flowing manes of each spotless animal were streaming with water of crystal brightness. The driver of the car was a man of gigantic stature, and his long white beard flowed in massive wreaths over his shoulders. In his right hand he carried a trident ; with his left he controlled the movements of his steeds. Behind him, in the car, were the Riflemen who had been sent out to reconnoitre, and in the rear followed a band of sea nymphs and water sprites, who floated through the air as lightly as gossamer in an August wind. They never touched the earth

but to bound higher into the illuminated space, or to disport themselves closer to the driver of the glimmering chariot. Many of them waved around their sister nymphs azure scarfs of the most delicate texture, whilst others held gorgeous shells to their mouths, and created music, which rose and fell in varying cadence, like celestial echoings from a thousand golden harps.

This, surely, is Neptune and his court, I thought, rubbing my eyes, and wondering if my senses were failing me. But, much as I rubbed my eyes, the picture did not fade. Nor would I have had it disappear, for there was nothing disagreeable about it. Neptune, evidently, was not in that terrible humour which moved him when, as Homer relates, he strode the world in three gigantic strides. Then the nymphs of the deep—without their tails, too, strange to say—were beautiful creatures, with real, natural ankles and feet. No wonder that Acis fell in love with Galatea! No wonder the fairy tempters have induced fascinated mortals to plunge into deep, dark waters after singing Nereids! Then there were river nymphs, from the Severn, and fancy detected amongst them the beautiful, the lovely Sabrina, made famous in Milton's "Comus." Deities of the air, too, had joined the gorgeous throng. Indeed, the brilliant assemblage would have looked more like a production of the air than the sea, but for the adornments which the Nereids wore, and the intermingling of bands of nymphs and sprites peculiarly oceanic.

When this magnificent procession reached the spot where I and my amazed comrades stood, it

decended amidst a cloud of the most delicious perfume. The riflemen who were in the car immediately leapt from it, to the delight of their brethren in arms, and cried "All hail, mighty Neptune, King of the Sea!"

Upon this the gigantic individual, with the long white beard, stood upright, as a man does when about to deliver himself of an oration; but never did I see such a man—I should say such a monarch—as King Neptune. He was at least twenty feet high and proportionably wide. When he coughed several riflemen were knocked down by the force of his breath, and, I grieve to say, cut a very sorry figure, especially one luckless officer, whose sword became so helplessly entangled with his legs that I was obliged to pick him up, at which a general titter ran through the assembled crowd of ladies of the sea, several of whom were compelled to thrust their scarfs into their mouths to prevent themselves from laughing outright; whilst at least a dozen sprites of the male sex were suddenly seized with fits of leap-frog, and one of them turned a somersault, and jumped so high that I believe he never came down again.

Whilst these little incidents were going on, Neptune commenced to speak, and so well do I remember his words that not only can I write out a fair transcript of his speech, but I think I can fill in the cheers, &c., after the style of "our own reporter's" reports of the speeches of public men; at any rate, I will endeavour to do so.

His Majesty, the King of the Sea, having received the salutations of his retinue and the Bristol Volunteers, turned towards the latter, and having

coughed several riflemen off their legs, as I have before described (and, by the bye, this is not the first time that Englishmen have been coughed down) his Majesty spoke as follows:—"Gentlemen and soldiers; sons of Britain and Bristol (cheers); inhabitants of the Dry Land; brave Volunteers (cheers). In the first place we must apologise (no, no,) for having personally inconvenienced several of you by a severe cough, which has afflicted us (cries of 'no apology, your Majesty') ever since our Coral Palace in the Pacific has been undergoing repairs. As we said before, we apologise for this little mishap (no, no), as every gentleman should do who inconveniences another (cheers). But not to detain you, we will proceed, and, by the aid of a few notes we have made, we hope to be enabled to tell you all we have to say in a very short space of time. [Here his Majesty pulled from a girdle, which encircled his waist, an immense flat shell, covered with strange-looking memoranda, after which he proceeded with his speech.] Many years ago, gentlemen—after the birth of our thousandth child, nevertheless—we formed a strong attachment for your little island, and often thought, as one of your ballad makers hath well expressed it—

'If ever we live upon Dry-land,
The land we would hit on
Would be Little Briton;
For, oh, 'tis a tight little island.'

(Great cheering). Ages passed on, and we often came with our court to reside, in the summer months, near the whitest of your cliffs, which, we are bound to say, beat all others for real beauty, by long chalks (laughter). Gentlemen, we beg you will

not laugh at that remark. We can assure you it was not intended as a joke, and we beg you will not put it down as a chalk for us. We have no sympathy with such jokes (solemn silence). Your laughter, a little out of place we cannot help feeling, has prevented a passing allusion to some intelligence we received from the milky way, lest you should imagine for a moment that we intended to make another puny pun. But to proceed, gentlemen (cheers). Upon one occasion, when our court had assembled near your chalk cliffs—we remember the time well, because the water had to be skimmed for a week of a thick frothy cream, which was carried to our royal manufactory to be converted into cheese and meerschaum pipes—the wise men of our court informed us that the Judge of the Supreme Court had ordained that, after the lapse of several ages, we should have a partner, besides our Royal Consort, Amphitrite, to assist us in ruling the main, although we were always to be the chief ruler—that is, King of the Sea—and to have dominion over our new partner also (cheers.) Whatever the court above does we are not above doing below (a laugh), we replied, and when we were informed that Britain was to be our help-mate, knowing the material of which she was made, we were delighted, and decreed an extra supply of natives for our whole court, until the arrival of the day which should consummate the mighty alliance (tremendous cheering). But sad troubles had to be endured by Britain ere she was fit for her new dignity. Like one of Mr. Bull's children, she was compelled, during her national infancy, to be afflicted with croup, measles, small-pox, and a

variety of other complaints (laughter). Like one of the same gentleman's puppies, she was condemned to the distemper, or like a puppy of another description, was doomed for a certain time to walk in the most uncomfortable clothes, and with the heaviest possible chains and rings that could possibly be invented by tailor or jeweller (laughter). In fact, you had to go through the fire, but, with our royal son Triton, we were always at hand to put a damper on the flames if they went too far (cheers). The time came at last for us to unite together, and we can now say to you, as we often say to our Queen—

> 'We have lived and loved together,
> Through many a changing year.'

(enthusiastic applause). Sometimes we have been baffled a little no doubt. For instance, whilst we are attending to State affairs at a distance you lose a ship or two, often through an overweening desire to propitiate me, and shine before other nations, and all that sort of thing. Well, 'accidents will happen in the best regulated families,' as was pithily remarked to us the other day by the lady on our left, when she upset, on a coral reef, one of the prettiest mother-of-pearl breakfast services we ever had in our royal dominions. [At this little rally of his Majesty one of the nymphs hung her head, and the whole court laughed as good humouredly as the King himself.] But we fear we detain you (no no). The other day we were informed by an agent—by agent do not imagine we mean that sort of person you style a gent (suppressed laughter); our agent is not of that class, we can assure you—in

the channel that, not satisfied with former defeats or recent Paris *fetes*, France was fitting out a fleet, to attempt a feat she never can perform—the feat of planting her invading feet in Britain (boisterous cheering and roars of laughter). In consequence of this intelligence we removed our court, and learning that the Bristol Channel had been selected as the point of attack, we took up our quarters off the Worm's Head. We should have come nearer to Bristol, but the fact is—we don't say it out of any disrespect—but the fact is the water gets so unbearably muddy the nearer one approaches Bristol (hear, hear), that the whole of our court, and especially the ladies, who wish to preserve their complexions, urged us to stay somewhere about the mouth of the channel. To cut a long story short, a French fleet arrived in the channel, as was expected. They escaped your channel squadron, and in order that the punishment of the would-be invader's impudence might be more complete, we left our court, and, with a chosen band of seamen, we followed them ourselves to Kingroad, and—*en passant*, as those barbarous French say—we cannot help remarking that it is the dirtiest King-road we ever saw. But arrived at Kingroad—as it may henceforth very properly be called since our royal visit—we caused you to be made aware of your danger, in order to test your bravery, and when we learnt that you were marching to meet the foe, we immediately upset Napoleon's fleet, and the whole of his force are now our prisoners (great cheering). So now that the danger is over, and we are thoroughly convinced of your valour, we shall give you a treat (cheers). It is centuries since we have permitted any of the

ladies of our ocean court ashore, but the main and the men too can spare them to-night, and here they may therefore re-main (great cheering ; also a slight titter, main-ly owing, no doubt, to his Majesty's main-tenance of that very style of puny, punning, and punishable language, which he had condemned at the commencement of his speech). We have sent a message to a friend of ours, a mighty princess in the Regions Etherial, and she has promised, in the fairest manner possible, to be present, with all the fairest of her fairies, at a gala, which is now being prepared in your honour. We would remain just for one dance ourself, but have a little business to attend to in the Mediterranean, where we have reason to expect there is a design to interfere with our dominion in those important waters. To see after that business is our present desire and intention. In the meantime we commit you to the care of our court and the fairies of the Etherial Regions. Upon you honour, as soldiers, we rely that the humblest of our royal court shall be treated as a lady should be treated (cheers). And now we take our leave, and bid you all good night. Adieu! A happy evening to all ! Good bye—good bye !"

"Tatta ! tatta !" cried several of the youngest of the sea nymphs, whilst the others bent lowly to the ground as the car moved slowly in the direction of the channel, the steeds pawing the yielding space, and the good-natured sea-king waving his trident to the bending nymphs, kissing his hand in return to their salute, and very waggishly whistling that well-known and deservedly popular melody, " The girls I left behind me."

The rifle band took the hint, and immediately

commenced to play, out of compliment to the king, the air of that good old song, "The Sea ! The Sea !" His Majesty reined in his steeds a few moments to listen, and then disappeared behind a cloud.

I felt exceedingly sorry when the jolly monarch had departed. I would feign have heard more concerning his Gallic prisoners, and, moreover, had formed quite a liking for the eccentric Water God. Had I known what were the contents of the cloud that hid him from my gaze, I certainly should have been perfectly content with his exit. But, like humanity in general, I sigh over a loss without thinking that it may be only making way for a gain, forgetting the good old adage that "all things happen for the best."

Immediately the last glimmer of Neptune's car had disappeared, the cloud which obscured it grew with such wondrous rapidity that we were soon in total darkness, and I grieve to say that several of my comrades availed themselves of this opportunity to intrude too much of their attentions upon the sea-nymphs, for I heard several half-smothered screams, which told me that Neptune's final demand was not being so fully obeyed as it should have been. "You are no soldier, and you are no gentleman either," I heard one of the nymphs exclaim. "Not," she continued, "that I would have minded the kiss, but to steal it in so unbecoming a manner, I blush for you really, and unless you are down on your knees with a most humble apology, I must report you to your commander." The apology was made, and so absurdly too, that several humorous young ladies laughed with refreshing heartiness.

A few minutes of total eclipse, and the earth shook with such violence that we were all tossed about as though the Down was a giant's carpet being shaken by the giant's servants, and I and my comrades had been thrown into it to amuse them. I began to think that this was past a joke, and wished myself at home again, when the vibration ceased, and strains of exquisite music filled the undulations of the air. Now it was the softest gushing melody, as if produced by the most delicate of wind and string instruments; now it rushed through the air in liquid tones, and now it swelled into grand melodious paroxysms, that I can only liken unto mighty torrents of ever-rolling harmony. Gradually these strains died away, and were followed by a vocal chaunt, in which I detected the following words :—

"We come! we come!
From the regions of the air,
We come! we come!
With the fairest of the fair.

"Then ring, ring, ye fairy bells ring,
Ring out through the earth and the sky;
A peal for the Great Ocean King,
A peal for Britain's victory.

"And light your ruddy fires,
Ye gods of the sun-lit East;
And fairies strike your lyres,
To honour Neptune's feast."

As the chaunt proceeded, innumerable peals of fairy bells were heard in the distance, and the dark cloud gradually opened, discovering the descent of the fairies of the Etherial Regions, headed by their Queen, Juno. As they approached the earth the sea-nymphs rose into the air to meet them,

and were welcomed in these words, which were sung in chorus:—

Welcome, sweetest sisters,
From your amber dales and dells;
Welcome, fairy sisters,
With your wiles, and charms, and spells.

Whilst the female deities of sea and air were going through the ceremony of individual introduction, I looked about me and found that during the darkness from which I and my fellows had been so agreeably relieved, the country around had undergone a marvellous change. We were standing on the edge of St. Vincent's Rocks, opposite Nightingale Valley. The Down had lost its frosty appearance, and was covered with velvet turf, gemmed with myriads of small creeping flowers and delicate mosses, amongst which sparkled radiant drops of dew, glistening like resplendent jewels. The Observatory was a fairy palace, decorated, on the exterior, with the choicest of Mr. West's pictures, and the pillars of the suspended Suspension-bridge were transformed into a couple of gigantic dolphins, from whose mouths issued jets of water, that bounded over the rocks and were lost amidst the overhanging foliage. The river was as clear as crystal, and on its swelling tide were hundreds of fairy barques containing nymphs of surpassing beauty. The adjacent woods were studded with temples of porphyry and gold, and the trees were filled with nightingales and birds of every hue. There was a bridge from the rocks to the top of the valley, constructed so lightly that it had the appearance of the most delicate fretwork, and was

swayed by every breeze. Upon the whole charming scene troups of the rosiest sunbeams cast their refulgent glances, and, as they glimmered on the rocks the alabaster wall threw back a thousand prismatic hues that made rainbows on the crystal river, and scattered about light and shade in a variety of tints that the pencil of a Turner would have failed to depict.

When the fairies had alighted upon the earth, the Queen delivered a chaste poetical address to the whole regiment, which presented arms as she advanced. She bade us enjoy the treat which Neptune had ordered as a reward for our bravery, and then invited us to accompany her and her retinue to the enchanted woods, which had, she said, been filled with every conceivable charm for our gratification and amusement. We followed her over the bridge accordingly, and found everything imaginable and unimaginable prepared for us. There were temples of love, and temples of wine; temples for smoking such tobacco as only the gods are permitted to enjoy; temples for classical games; temples of jewels; and temples containing everything that the heart could wish for. Besides, there were gardens which looked in the sun like kaleidoscope pictures, and hundreds of woodland promenades and woodland bowers, which eclipsed in grandeur and beauty everything I had ever seen or imagined.

My comrades amused themselves in all manner of ways. For my own part, I was so enraptured and bewildered that I betook myself to a bower and watched a bevy of fairies, who tripped it lightly, in a voluptuous dance, on a piece of

elastic turf opposite an alabaster grotto. I retired to the fairy retreat, and gazed upon the fairy throng enraptured. I had not long feasted my eyes when forth came one of the group towards me. She was the fairest creature these eyes ever beheld—the very counterpart of my blue-eyed Milly.

"Well, Charles," she said, when she had arrived at the spot where I stood, "I hope you are enjoying yourself."

"Enjoying myself — I am in heaven," I exclaimed.

"No, you are not, my dear, and I hope you will not go there yet," she replied; the voice, the action, the manner of her speech, all Milly's.

"Will you permit me to ask you a question, fair young lady?" I said.

"A thousand, if you like," she replied, pulling her gossamer-like scarf round her beautiful shoulders.

"May I ask, then, what is your name?"

"Let us walk to yonder grotto on the hill, and I will tell you," said my sweet companion, and we rambled there, arm in arm, the soft breeze playing upon our cheeks, and scattering around us perfumes which seemed to intoxicate me with a strange indescribable delight.

Arrived at the grotto, which was on the top of a precipice, overlooking the fairy river, my sweet companion said, "You wish to know my name?"

"I do," I replied, with great earnestness.

"Well, Mr. Simpkins, my name is Milly."

"Then you are my own dear Milly transformed into a fairy."

"No! no! not quite so fast. I am Milly, and I am not Milly, if you can make that out."

I confessed that I could not comprehend the somewhat paradoxical situation she assigned herself, so she described her meaning somewhat in this fashion.

"You see the Queen of the Etherial Regions, who is one of the kindest-hearted queens in the whole dominions of Fairyland, takes under her care all the good maidens of the earth, assigning to each constant fair one a fairy protector, who becomes, as it were, the spiritual counterpart of the one protected. I am your Milly's guardian. I watch over her slumbers, and am often with her during the day. When I am absent from her I know where she is and what she is doing, because I can always see her wherever she may be. I am, therefore, Milly's living spirit, and know all her doings, and that accounts for my being like her. If you look amongst the fairies around you, you will find, I dare say, many features which may be familiar to you, because you may know the young ladies over whose destinies some of the fairies present are appointed to superintend."

I was astonished and delighted at this information, and put my arm round a fairy waist upon the strength of the fairy narrative.

"Tell me then where Milly is at the present moment, I pray you?"

"Oh, the dear girl is at home. She has heard of the defeat of the French, and is longing to throw herself into your arms."

"Bless her little heart," I ejaculated, and in the absence of the original, I embraced the spiritual

representative with great fervour, and to my inexpressible delight, found that my companion was not so etherial as she had led me to imagine. She did not melt into thin air in my arms, or anything of that sort, but seemed as palpable and real a form as ever was embraced by lover.

I was just about to consummate my joy by kissing the prettiest of pretty mouths, when I felt my shoulder violently shaken. Thinking this some supernatural work to warn me not to let my ecstacy carry me so far as kissing, I took no notice of it, but again pressed forward to salute the ruddy lips of my spiritual Milly, when a hand seized me by the shoulder and pushed me headlong down the yawning abyss. Over and over and over I went, whirling in the air, dashing myself against rocks, falling over trees, entangling myself in foliage, until at last I fell, with a terrible crash, on the river's bank. Lying there bleeding and bruised, a hand still shook me by the shoulder, and instead of the enchanted perfume of Fairyland, a most unmistakable breeze of onions and gin-and-water played about my nasal organs.

"Mr. Simpkins! Mr. Simpkins!" screamed a scolding voice in my ear.

I opened my eyes, and—oh! horror!—there I lay on my couch in my little parlour just as I had arrived from drill; and there stood my scarecrow of a landlady screaming her head off at me.

"I thought I never should a waked yer. Oh dear, oh dear, wos iver a woman frighted so afore."

"Go to the devil," I believe I was ungallant and vulgar enough to exclaim when I was quite awake,

and found that the invasion and the charming afterpiece were only a dream, from which I had been awakened when it was most like reality.

"Some people must a go there in there sleep, or somewhere worse, for you wos a talking just now that it wos very dark, and you wished you wos at home. Ah! thinks I, thank God I hevs a good conscience. Well, when I ears you a saying it wos dark, I givs you a riglar shake all over, but as for waking un, I might as well a shook them statis as is alers a kneeling up in the Cathedral, and niver says their prayers," was the substance of my landlady's reply, uttered with indignant volubility.

That "riglar shake" accounted for the earth trembling so during the transformation business, of course, and the old griffin was shaking me when I first essayed to kiss Milly. I could have annihilated that respectable landlady of mine on the spot, but as that would have been useless slaughter, I kicked her brass fender, and ordered the brazen-faced owner thereof never to wake me again, though my groans might alarm a whole universe of good consciences.

AN AUTUMN LEAF.

FROM A CHAPTER ON TRAVELLING.

'Mid Autumn's purple sunsets,
A dirge note swells the blast,
And tells that soon the brightness
Of the year will all be past.

H. G. Adams.

Farewell, monsieur traveller; look you lisp, and wear strange suits, disable all the benefits of your own country, be out of love with your nativity, and almost chide God for making you that countenance you are; or I will scarce think you have swam in a gondola. *Shakespeare.*

Tourists are returning home by every train and steamer. The Rhine, the Lakes of Killarney, Scotland, and the English watering-places, are giving up their invigorated sojourners to the stern duties of business, or the almost equally arduous labour of discovering new pleasures at home. The Spirit of Autumn is abroad amongst the hills, and on the plains. It is heard at night on the ocean, and seen at morn in the curling wave. It appears in mists at eventide, and newly-fallen leaves tell of it in the morning sunlight. Oh! melancholy, yet fascinating Spirit of the Closing Year, how grand thou art in thy solemnity! how beautiful in thy bending simplicity! Now a lovely maiden, drooping like a lily beneath an adverse wind; now a giant, with locks, grey as the stubble fields at Harvest Home! I have seen thee in thy most beauteous aspects; in lonely woods; by running brooks; by the rolling sea; in the misty mountains; away from the smoke of towns, or the hackneyed paths of

tourists. And beautiful art thou as ever poet painted thee. An emblem of life—a fore-glimpse of man's mortality!

So much by way of introduction. I have returned, with the crowd, to city life again, and cannot be expected, at once, to shake off the influences of my recent trip into fairy land. I have not been to Baden Baden; I have not been lost in Alpine snows, nor have I sipped to satiety of Parisian pleasures. No! I have seen too little of my own country yet to rush off to foreign parts for novelty. Would that every Englishman made a point of seeing something of the "green and sunny spots" of his own native land, ere he leaves it for continental trips! We have Rhines and Switzerlands at home, if English eyes could only see them. But, unfortunately, in many cases, it is merely for the sake of saying they have seen such and such a place, that many persons are induced to take long journeys, and become great travellers.

He is the man that best enjoys travelling who, fresh from the heat and bustle of the city, travels for enjoyment's sake; loves the beauties of nature for themselves alone; has no vain yearning to inscribe his name in "visitors' book" thousands of miles from home; no desire to "do" as large a tract of country as possible in the smallest possible period. Can anything be more obnoxious to a sensible man than to find, on every ruin to which his guide conducts him, names and initials cut in the oak panels, ground into the crumbling walls, engraved on the adjacent trees, or cut out in the smooth turf of the courtyards? Commend me to the nooks and corners of Great

Britain, which have not become the popular resorts of tourists ; where poets and painters have not been before you to exaggerate little things, nor book-makers to write their history ; where lodging-house keepers have not pitched their tents, nor local innkeepers learnt their power for good or evil.

Thanks to the vanity of travelling, there are many such spots around our coasts, if we except the footsteps of the book-makers. The Welsh coast, for instance, abounds with glorious retreats, where you may live, bathe, shoot, fish, sail, and be merry, without coming, at every turn, under the telescope of a tourist, or being interrupted by the fussy importance of " Old Men of the Mountain," who insist on sending you to sleep with long stories, or upsetting your palate with bad cigars—the stepping stones to "acquaintanceship," the sprats thrown out for hooking bigger fish. Where no "mud-pies" or semi-lakes interrupt your morning stroll along the beach ; where no donkeys mingle with the view of the distant sea ; where no bathing machines thrust forth their dirty inharmonious forms against the clear outline of rock ; where no terraces of houses, with high-sounding names, frown upon your humble lodgings at the inn ; where no lisping swells complain that the castle on the hill is "a fine wuin, but vewy much owt of wepair ;" where no hired country band bores you with wretched interpretations of Verdi; where the everlasting unprotected female, with the blue sun-shade over her faded features, is gone from the beach even at low water (where, in fashionable watering places, she is usually found in lonely contemplation of a sea shell) ; where

indeed you are alone with Nature and yourself —unless, of course, you have a companion, a charming woman for instance, to participate in your pleasures.

Along the rocky coast of Gower, leaving the Mumbles on one hand and the Worm's Head on the other, you may find all the fascinating quietude and beauties of which I speak; pretty bays encircled with rocks and hills which stretch away into wooded vales, where leafy steeps rise by the side of sparkling rivulets. Only a few stray pleasure-seekers and book-makers have been before you. The former have left little traces of their journeyings. The latter you need not read, unless it is to see how industrious some have been in inventing stories and manufacturing rustic conversations; but pin your faith to their statements and you are lost. The simple-hearted women and children, the unsophisticated fishermen and pilots, who tell romantic stories about fairies, are myths. Don't believe a word of it; or farewell peace of mind —farewell pleasure, satisfaction, enjoyment. Believe in these book-makers' stories of the simple intelligence and romantic superstition of the peasants, and in the ingenuousness of your nature, seeing, at a distance, a Welsh girl gathering laver bread on the rocks, you may hasten to the place and question the object of your curiosity, in the hope of eliciting a pathetic story of love or a romantic narrative of darkness, such as those you see printed by the book-makers. Thus perchance would you be disappointed :—

Stranger: Well, my little girl ; what are you gathering ?

Peasant Girl: Laver bread.

Stranger: Yes; and what is laver bread for?

Peasant Girl: To eat.

Stranger: For whom do you gather it, my good girl?

Peasant Girl: Mother.

Stranger: What does she with it?

Peasant Girl: Eat it.

Stranger: Do you not sell it then?

Peasant Girl: Yes.

Stranger (getting less verbose in his questions): Where?

Peasant Girl (going away): At the market.

Stranger (taking a sudden interest in a distant sail): Oh!

Now your professional book-maker would make a pretty little sea-side narrative out of such a meeting as that, working it up perhaps after this fashion :—

"The other morning as we rambled along the rocky shore, the sea gulls screaming over our head, and the ocean rolling in majestic grandeur at our feet, we observed at a somewhat inaccessible part of the rugged coast the figure of a little girl, clad in the native costume of Wales. With some difficulty we gained the scene of her industrious occupation, the collection of a peculiar kind of sea-weed, called by the natives laver bread, which, after undergoing a cleansing process, is eaten after the manner of a vegetable. It is sold in the Swansea market, and is to the poor peasant an important source of revenue. (Here follows a note of reference, on turning to which you will find duly set forth the nature and history of laver bread.)

" 'What are you gathering, little girl?' we said, as she held up her pretty face at our approach.

" 'Laver bread, Sir, for my mother.'

" 'What do you do with it?'

" 'Eat as much as we can afford to eat, and sell the rest in the market,' the child replied, continuing her occupation, and filling her basket most industriously.

" 'Are you poor, then, my good girl?'

" 'Not when dear mother is well, Sir,' replied the girl, her soft blue eyes filling with tears; 'when mother is well we have meat and laver bread every day; but now we sell what can be done without, that mother may have a fire in her room.'

" 'Poor unhappy one; where is your father, then?' we asked.

" The poor child sobbed aloud at the mention of her father, who, she said, was taken away by the fairies a year ago. He was a fisherman, and being wrecked one fine moonlight night near a small bay, adjacent to Rhosilly, he swam ashore whilst the fairies were tripping over the golden sands. For interrupting the midnight sport and seeing what no mortal eye can see and live—that mystic dance of the fairy elves in the moonlight—the poor fisherman was carried to the fairy bowers a slave to the mysterious 'gentry.' Such was the superstitious account the child gave us of her father's death.

" 'But how, my child, do you know that the fairies took away your father?'

" 'It was told to mother in her dreams, and she has heard the fairy music when the moon rises.'

"We found that for months the unsophisticated child had maintained her bereaved mother merely by gathering laver bread. She led us to the humble cot in which she resided, and there we found the mother influenced by the same superstitious feelings as those which actuated her child, whose little blue eyes would lighten up with curious intelligence, as she told us of the doings of the fairies, whom she confidently believed would hear the supplications she offered up, in the moonlight, to take herself and mother to the place where the poor fisherman was confined, or let him return to those who pined for him at home. We were quite affected with this little picture of the romantic child-like attention of the peasant girl, and, we need not say, lent a helping hand to lighten the burden which weighed so heavily on their humble household. We often saw the little blue-eyed believer in fairies during our stay, and christened her 'Our little Welsh fairy.'

* * * * *

"Returning to this spot some few months afterwards, we sought the cot of Our Little Fairy. Empty, desolate, still as the grave, was the once pretty cottage. The wind moaned around in sorrowful cadence, and the sea-birds shrieked as they whirled by in the yielding air. Death had removed the sorrowful mother. Our Little Fairy had gone to the crystal halls of fairydom."

* * * * *

Don't believe a word of it!

ON KEEPING UP APPEARANCES.

What a hollow miserable system this keeping up appearances is ; living a continual, daily, yearly lie ; ever on guard against anticipated attacks upon your mock fame and wealth ; existing on false appearances, making what the world calls friends of those who would not know you for yourself, but associate with you on the strength of your assumed wealth or family connexions!

I know a man who for years did nothing, absolutely nothing, but keep up appearances, merely because he had suddenly grown rich, and wanted the world to think he had never been poor. Originally a shopkeeper, he was promoted from the counter to affluence by an unexpected legacy of three hundred pounds a-year. He removed from the scene of his former occupation to live the life of "a gentleman of independent fortune," in the capital of a distant county. From this time he never knew a moment's real happiness. He was always engaged in mounting guard against imaginary attacks upon his respectability. From morning till night he was ever prepared to rebut and resent fancied sneers at his humble origin. He would wake up in his dreams to quote the pedigree of his family, and exhibit the armorial bearings which he had procured from that particular office in the great metropolis, where there are ancient pedigrees for all who can pay for them. He exaggerated his income to such an enormous sum, in the imagination of his new friends, that he

soon found himself involved in a variety of expenses necessary to the maintenance of the great lie of society. The result was a keeping up of appearances to such an alarming extent that the imaginary fabric of wealth soon came to the ground, and left our hero without a sovereign to commence life again—either as a "gentleman" or a tradesman. As drowning men catch at straws he turned to his friends for assistance, and found them all engaged—in keeping up appearances.

The widow of a respectable bagman, or "commercial gentleman," as the modern title runs, occupies the grand suite of apartments above my modest rooms. Her struggle of keeping up appearances is an extremely arduous one. For a whole week the drawing-room lady, my landlady tells me, (that landlady of mine will talk when she pays me her weekly visit, whether I will or not,) often lives on a pound of beef. The first day it comes to table in the shape of soup, and, with an occasional dining out, the beef, served up in a variety of ways, is made to do duty at five o'clock every day from Monday until Saturday. Then it is served up with silver, preceded each day with the remains of yesterday's soup. Every day a lemon is squeezed and a cayenne cruet shaken into a soup plate, and every day there is a pompous set out of glass, linen, and silver. Finger glasses and an apple follow, and in an hour afterwards dry toast and coffee serve for tea and supper. The poor old soul goes to bed hungry every night, but she cannot afford to live better, her income being chiefly expended in the rent of her elegant rooms. Occasionally the widow has company, upon which

occasions the visitors eat and drink as much in an evening as their hostess consumes in six months. But then, what a triumph the widow enjoys through all these sacrifices! She keeps up appearances, and by the success which attends her efforts, makes *her* world believe that she is the widow of a great man who died rich enough to leave her a great fortune.

The widow has a daughter, who visits her twice a year. The daughter keeps up appearances. She is second nursery governess in an obscure nobleman's family, and she comes home and talks of Lady Wimpleton with great familiarity. The widow assists the daughter, by whispering to her nearest friend that she should be very glad if her daughter and Lady Wimpleton were not upon such intimate terms, for she would rather have the dear girl at home with her. "It is really a great sacrifice to give up one's old family residence in the north; come westerly, and live in rooms, because one's daughter is so deeply loved by the Wimpletons. But there, my dear friend, I could not oppose her inclinations for the world; and, moreover, she is at an age when the usages and pleasures of high society are necessary to her!" What a dear good soul that widow is, to be sure!

"A noble lord, a friend of my family, has sent me a hogshead of the celebrated old ale from the cellars of Turnbury Castle; call and taste it," said a most inveterate keeper-up of appearances to me the other day. "It is a novelty, I assure you; a little thick, perhaps, but attractive from its associations." I called accordingly. "Master has just gone out, Sir, in the Hon. Sydney Flumpington's

carriage." "Is your mistress at home?" "She is, sir; will you take a seat in the reception-room, sir?"

I did take a seat in the "reception-room." The lady of the house soon entered. After some ordinary civilities I explained that, at the urgent request of Mr. Pimpleton, I had called to taste his celebrated Turnbury ale. "Oh, certainly, by all means," said Mrs. Pimpleton, ringing the bell and darting out immediately afterwards to give some instructions respecting the liquor.

In a few minutes the lady returned, and almost simultaneously with that important event, the youngest of the Pimpleton family rushed in with the exclamation, "Oh, ma! the servant from the hotel has fallen down and spilt all the old ale you sent for."

I need not describe the consternation and fruitless efforts of Mrs. Pimpleton to explain, but I will venture to predict that the youngest of the Pimpleton family was beaten that day for her "rudeness."

Keeping up appearances is a pursuit in which we are all, more or less, engaged. To a certain extent, the laws of society enforce it. Fashion requires it, Trade and Commerce demand its observance, until plain simple Honesty is beaten out of the field by the new virtue, which nothing but the French word *finesse* seems strong enough and weak enough adequately to describe. To take a position in society, a man without lineage or wealth must seem what he is not. To insure confidence in trade a man must appear well-to-do when he is anything but well-to-do. Everybody seems to be engaged in making the world believe that they are that which they are not. A clerk,

with a hundred pounds a year, assumes the extravagances of the manager in the counting-house, and the manager apes the consequence of his master. The infection runs throughout society generally, from the drawing-room down to the kitchen. John tries to put on the dignity of his master, with his left-off clothes, and Mary will have her Sunday dress made and trimmed like her mistress's beautiful *moire antique*, even though Mary's be nothing more than a common bombazeen.

What a pity it is we cannot all live together in this every-day world of ours, and be content to be what we are. As far as happiness is concerned, I am satisfied that the shortest way to anything like an elysium on earth is to seem no more than we are, and conduct ourselves honourably and honestly in the station in which we are placed, always, of course, with a laudable ambition, striving to progress upwards.

This may not always be the road to earthly fame. Indeed, there are many examples to the contrary. But the man raised above his fellows by a fleeting popularity, on a false basis, is not an enviable man. Moreover, happiness seldom associates with pomp, and noise, and glitter. It is certainly not attended with a vain wretched struggle at keeping up appearances. The Italian Bishop who, in every change of fortune, first looked up to heaven and remembered that his first business was to get there ; then looked down to earth, and called to mind how small a space he should fill in it ; then looked abroad, and saw what multitudes were in all respects less happy than himself, was a true philosopher, and found real happiness.

SOME BROOKS I USED TO KNOW.

I.

THE LOVERS.

High up in the Peak, amongst a hundred clustering piles of broken rock, where, in the mysterious past, the Titans might have been playing "duck-stone," a brook, I used to know, had its birth, and a noisy merry birth it was, too. The thousand little pebbles which had fallen from the Titans' playthings rolled about in the bubbling water, the trees bent down their heads to see what was going on amongst their great straggling roots, and the brook I used to know laughed and shouted as he bounded away from the rocks and the fir trees.

As the stream rolled on, crowds of hyacinths nodded from curious nooks and corners, trying to catch glimpses of their waving bells in his radiant happy face, but the brook I used to know was too boisterous, high up in the rocky Peak, to pay attention to the flowers, not one of which could reflect its pretty form in the stream, for the foam and spray he used to throw about him amongst the stones and the tree-roots. Away he went, shouting and laughing, and secretly longing to be down in the Plain, which stretched away in verdant meadows until the distant hills shut them out from the far off country beyond.

Down in the Plain a little winding shining

shingly brook, called, I think, the Rother, glided through the meads, and its soft and gentle music was sometimes wafted away, like a zephyr-breath, to the young giant-brook of the mountain, until he of the Peak had longings to join she of the Plain, which made him dash onwards with redoubled vigour. No obstacle could restrain the brook-born torrent of the Peak. If a tree fell in his way or a pile of rock interposed its rough front, the lithe lover of the sweet little Rother would speedily overcome them. Stopping for awhile as if to gather strength, he would swell with his overpowering efforts, until he bounded over the obstruction with a shout of defiance, charging, like a white foaming war-horse, at the next opponent, and bearing on, with reckless rage, spoils of the noisy combat.

At last, maddened with the excitement of victory, and urged on by the gentle daughter of the Plain, he leaped headlong over a precipice, and hill, dale, and dell echoed with his shout as he alighted in the broad open Plain below.

But the leap was a desperate one, and my brook of the mountain became much calmer after his first great ebullition of victory. He flowed along with a quiet murmur, and buttercups and primroses, and little trees and waving reeds collected on his banks and bowed to their counterfeits in the mirror he made for them. On he wandered until the whisperings of the Rother seemed to mingle with his subdued voice as though they held sweet converse together. Then, as if to carry out my simile of The Lovers, the Rother suddenly turned away and went off into the woods laughing—yes, fairly laughing, as she entered the

glen, derisive laughter at he of the mountain, with whose earnestness she sought to flirt and trifle. "I care not for you, rough son of the Peak," her voice seemed to say amongst the trees; but she spoke not what she really felt, for she came back, at the turn of the hill side, and made up for her coyness by leaping into the arms of him of the mountain.

Then the mountain-born son of the Peak married the beautiful meandering Rother, and they flowed on through the world, blending their voices together; and their path, though often rough and rugged, was sometimes strewn with moss and with flowers.

II.

THE OFFSPRING.

Two little winding rivulets soon branched off into the meadows, intersecting each other's course, and flowing along in pretty intricacies, as though they sported with each other in the sunshine, and joined defiance to the shadow. They both gurgled, and rippled, and trickled through a wood. A thousand velvety mosses spread out their soft arms over the pebbles in their path, which was fringed with water-lilies and forget-me-nots. In the Spring time, the brooks kept up an incessant purling sound, like the wind sweeping through a lyre. In Summer, they scarcely whispered through the deep shady grove. In Autumn, they became quite angry and clamorous. In Winter, their voices were hushed: they lay like the dead awaiting the resurrection.

When they came out of the wood they parted. One went off over a bye-lane round the common, and assisted the canal to carry barge-loads of iron-stone. The other ran on by the hedge-row, and passed through the fields, not far from "Our School." It was a brave little brook then, affording frolicsome youth a source of endless amusement. The boys played "follow my leader" on its banks, which led to many a ducking. I could take you now, dear reader, to every particular jump by which the brook was marked. The leap over the sloe bush on the one side, and into the reeds on the other, was the famous jump which made

"follow my leader" peculiarly exciting and daring. Then there was the pole across the weir near the silk factory. It was a treacherous piece of timber, that. Besides being slippery, it was rickety, and many a venturesome "follow my leader" has had cause to remember its peculiarities.

But a word about that little silk factory. "Work! Work! Work!" Men received money enough to keep wives and families, and women enough to keep husbands and families, and boys and girls enough to have pocket-money and go into all the shows on fair-days, for working here. Work! Can this be work? I used to ask myself, as I sat in the summer sun, listening to the throbbing pulsation of the machinery and the voices of the factory-girls blending in vocal chaunt with the chatter of the whirling bobbins. Could this be work? The sun shone upon a hundred windows, and gilded the ivy-leaves which crept up the red brick building. The smoke from the tall chimney mounted up into the blue heavens, and made a cloud-land of its own, which sunbeams deigned to visit and turn into gold. Vocal strains, the voice of woman, came out from the shining windows. Could that be work? The brook rolled on at my feet, and joined in the music of the factory. Oh, to be in the mill! I sighed, and send the silk worm's webb spinning round yon whirling reels! Oh, to be a factory boy in that great brick palace of glittering wheels and singing maidens!

How terrified should I have been, had I suddenly seen, in those boyish dreamings, the untimely ghosts which had peopled the land of shades from that shining palace of brick and glass. Where I, in

my ignorant fancy, thought angels sat, demons reigned and ruled. What a shock it was to my feelings as the truth dawned upon me in after years! Could that be work? No; it was bitter, heavy, killing toil. From early morning, when the lark carolled to the sky, until night, when the bat whirled through the dusky air, small fingers guided and little eyes watched the dancing threads until heads were giddy, and pulses low, and brains were like to crack. From sunlight until red garish gas gleamed along the whirligig of shafts and straps, and made the air thick and hot, stunted youth sat and toiled, until God, in His mercy, looked down from His throne, and stilled the heart of the wearied and toilworn. Work! It was murder!

The offspring, which I traced through the woods, had its troubles. Less than a mile past "Our School," the great powers who ruled the little town closely imprisoned the brook, and covered it up with paving stones and dirt, beneath which, if you listened attentively, you could hear it roaring and dashing itself against its prison walls until it bounded out of the viaduct into the town reservoir. Here it mingled together with a host of other little streams which, after contributing their due share to a thousand water-pipes, were let out along a smooth pebbly reen which led to The Old Brook.

III.

THE OLD BROOK WHICH TURNED UNDERWOOD'S MILL.

Old Brook ! It was in thy pellucid waters I caught my first fish, sailed my first miniature man-of-war, had my first open air bath. It was on thy verdant banks I first began to feel what poetry was, and receive inspiration enough to understand the beauties of the great Masters of Song. Wandering, by thy side, I learnt my earliest lessons of life and formed notions of what the great world, into which I was one day to enter, was like. As I watched thee, winding on into the misty distance, I used to picture the great towns through which thou passed ere thou joined the mighty sea—imagine myself far away in one of those bustling resorts of man, where, in a few years, I, a dreaming boy, might be struggling in the great battle of life to seize the undefined prize of hope and ambition. And thou art fresh in my memory now, Old Brook, as if I were again a child on thy banks, laughing when thou wert boisterous and merry, thoughtful and still when thou became hushed and uncommunicative. I can hear thy voice, like the rustling of a Spirit, haunting the pictures which come and go at the magic touch

of Memory. And thou tellest me what a mere atom I am in this great world of ours. For centuries thou hast rolled on thy ceaseless course. In a few short years the boy who played on thy banks will be no more ; yet thou wilt go onwards still. Empires may shake and totter to their foundation. Kings may fall, and new princes wield new sceptres. Race may strive against race, man against his fellow-man, until war and rapine tinge thy little waves with blood. Yea, even the mill on thy very banks may fall to decay ; the weirs over which thou leapest to sunny plains may disappear ; the cottages whence little ones dabble tiny hands in thy clear bright waters ; all thy own immediate friends, as it were, whom thou hast known for years, may pass away ; yet Time will bring no change to thee : thou wilt still go on to the sea, singing as thou flowest—

> "For men may come and men may go,
> But I flow on for ever."

The Old Brook came from the mountains. Sometimes it was noisy, sometimes it was still. There were many pretty rural pictures on its banks. Now a cottage, with a rustic boat by the brookside to gain the opposite bank in flood times, lent its charm to the scene. Then a mill appeared in front of a background made up of high wooded hills. Anon a village would spring up, and away in other regions of which I had little knowledge, towns grew on its banks and made its waters muddy and thick.

There was not a prettier picture anywhere than the water mill, where the country people brought their corn to be ground. To see the Old Brook

turn the great wheel, and dance, in a thousand glittering drops from every timber, was worth walking miles for. And then to hear it after it broke away from the task and darted off, under the great black arch below, into the fields, was to be deafened with wild turbulent music. The Old Brook seemed glad to escape from the mill, and free itself from the great flood-gates where it was kept, a partial prisoner, as a guarantee against its running away without turning the wheel and grinding the corn. Well it might like to get away from the broad deep lake which the miller made it into ! for there had been strange things done at the Mill Dam, and ghosts, all in white, had been known to glide over its deep dark surface.

The Old Brook had its stories and its legends. There is one connected with the mill and its master, which I will tell you here, dear reader, whilst we sit, in imagination, by the Mill Dam:—

Mark Underwood, who keeps that mill and owns nearly all the country you can see around you, including that fine new house on the hill yonder, was once poor, and, paradoxical as it may appear, was suddenly ruined by becoming rich. All his boyish hopes and dreams had been frustrated by money.

When Mark was a young man, the pride of the neighbouring village, the hope of the town a little way down the brook, and the betrothed of Alice Martin, who lived five miles above the mill dam, an old uncle died and left him heir to a large estate, in which was included the mill. This turned the young man's head, gave him proud

and extravagant notions, and made him forget his youthful love. Soon, however, an unfortunate speculation lost him his gold and his friends. Those who thronged around him in his prosperity scoffed at him in his adversity. The only being who did not desert him in affliction was the sweetheart of his boyish days. She came to him, after those who smiled upon him when he was rich knew him no more, to breathe words of comfort and remind him of days gone by. But she, poor thing, fell a sacrifice to her devotedness and her lover's insincerity. Scandal wove its meshes around her and robbed her of the shelter of a father's roof. The blow fell too heavily for her weak nature to bear, and a frozen corpse, taken from the Old Brook a week afterwards, told too truly how much she had suffered.

After this, Mark stood alone in the world, a friendless and almost heart-broken man. Having interest and money enough left to obtain the mill where his uncle had amassed most of his wealth, he left the great town where he had been unfortunate, and, as years rolled on, regained the lost estate. Everything he touched seemed to turn into gold. The country people said he had sold himself to the devil. If he had done so, it was certainly, regarded in a worldly light, a most profitable speculation for the amateur miller.

Mark hated Christmas, and, indeed, every other holiday which, in any way, interfered with his worldly arrangements. He never went out at Christmas time to see relations or friends, neither did he entertain neighbour or relative at the mill.

Sarah, his housekeeper, although in everything

else she conformed to the odd notions of her master, always went out, on Christmas Eve, to drink tea with her nephew and his wife, who lived in the little town of Oldbrook, with a family of six fat and rosy romping youngsters, to whom she took her annual Christmas boxes, and found ample reward in being kissed, under the mistletoe, by all the little ones. Sarah had herself once looked forward to being the happy mother of a host of little cherubs like these, but her "poor John" was lost on his return voyage from Australia, and ever since she had been the faithful housekeeper of Mark Underwood.

"To be sure," she used to say, "master is sometimes a bit fidgetty and crotchetty; but he has had his trials, and in the main he is very kind to a poor helpless woman like me."

The Christmas chimes were ringing in the village, and came wandering through the air from Oldbrook. The winter had been severe, and hundreds of boys and men were skating and sliding on the mill dam. Enough water flowed, however, to turn the mill, and round went the wheel as of yore.

"Stop that mill, ou'd oicicle," said a rosy-cheeked youngster, as he ran past on his way to the village.

"A merry Christmas to thee, ou'd Underwood; tha looks as if tha'd been rear'd on sno'bolls; tak' a boite at that," said a daring young factory lad from Oldbrook, dashing a snowball at the little window where Mark had just presented himself to see if the snow still fell.

"Confound those brats," exclaimed Mark,

clenching his fist. And the bells rung merrier still. Lights gleamed from the distant village, and the laugh of happy youth filled the air. Mark's head man had stopped the wheel, as was his wont, by special leave, on Christmas Eve, although Mark entertained a great desire to set it going again after tea. And the bells rung merrier still.

Mark sat down. Something seemed to trouble him—thoughts, perhaps, of other days had been awakened by the familiar sounds which broke upon his ear. For an hour he sat rocking himself to and fro in his chair. And the bells rung merrier still. At length the night grew darker and darker, until, save now and then, in the flicker of the firelight, Mark could scarcely see across his little room. The noise in the village grew still, the bells ceased telling their "tidings of great joy," and the regular tick-tack, tick-tack of the old clock on the stairs became more distinct. The fire was getting low, the wind was getting high, and now and then a hiss in the smouldering ashes told of the falling snow without.

Presently, old Underwood looked up and found that he was not alone. A figure was seated opposite him, watching him with a huge pair of lustrous eyes, which, for a time, held him in motionless fascination. But Mark had a stout heart. He soon rallied and demanded the business of his mysterious visitor.

The Shadow with the eyes then informed Mark that he was the ghostly representative of his uncle, who, when he died, fearing that his heir might be a spendthrift, had buried a large amount of treasure, near the oak tree on the common. He felt now, that Mark had gone through the fire

of adversity, seen the result of extravagance, and had turned out so excellent a speculator and so good a saver since, that he could not rest in his grave without Mark dug up the hidden treasure.

"I'll do it, I'll do it, if it's all fair and no humbug, Mr. What's-your-name," said the Miller, trembling before the Shadow.

"Then follow me," said the visitor.

"To-morrow," replied old Mark, "to-morrow I'll dig it up."

"To-night you'll do it," said the spirit.

The window shook, a gust of wind rushed down the chimney, the doors opened with a bang, and Mark followed his ghostly leader into the freezing Christmas air. But Mark was far from being cold. He was hot and feverish. He saw nothing but the glaring eyes of the ghost, and he followed them until he stood by the old oak tree on the common.

A spade and pick-axe were lying by the tree, and Mark, despite the coming infirmity of age, went lustily to work. For an hour he turned up the soil; for an hour the spirit stood by glaring at the gold finder.

Suddenly the axe struck against a hard substance.

"'Tis there!" said the spirit.

"'Tis there!" went echoing over the common.

"'Tis there!" was repeated by a thousand voices in the air.

Mark would have fallen, all but speechless, had he not suddenly discovered that his visitor had departed. But he soon rallied again. The passionate craving for gold was upon him, and he resumed his digging. The substance with which his axe had come in contact was an old-

fashioned urn full of guineas, notes on a local bank, and precious stones. It was all Mark could do to lift it.

"Oh, oh," chuckled Mark, as he feasted his eyes upon it. "I can satisfy my grudge against Simpkins and Co. There shall be a run on the Oldbrook Bank to-morrow. Why should I help the poor," he continued, as if answering a question suggested by the inward monitor, "I was poor myself. Nobody helped me. The poor, indeed, with their 'Merry Christmas.' No, no, Mark Underwood must look after himself."

Until the perspiration, in large drops, rolled down his face, the Miller laboured to put the urn and its treasure on his shoulder, and at last he succeeded. But why does he tremble? Why do his eyeballs almost start from his head? Why does he sink to the earth and cry for mercy?

The urn has changed. On the Miller's shoulder crouches a demon fearful to contemplate. It is peering into his face with a fiendish grin. The old oak tree, too, is changed. Jabbering sprites are swinging about in the creaking branches, and swarming around the supplicating miser. They hiss at him; and the air is filled with hellish laughter.

At this moment Mark Underwood would gladly have given up one-half of his wealth to have been once more at home at his mill. He prayed for mercy, but mercy came not, and, hoarse with crying, he fell senseless to the earth at the foot of the old oak tree.

He had lain there for some time, when, somewhat recovered from his fright, he felt himself

raised from the earth. By his side stood the figure which had first lured him from home, but without that terrible appearance which it had at first assumed. The tree had disappeared; the common, too, was gone; and there was a weight upon the back of Mark, which needed no care on his part to keep it there.

"Where are we?" asked the miller, turning to his ghostly attendant.

"Ask no questions, but pay attention to what thou seest. I have driven hence the fiends who terrified thee, and am now here, at the command of my master Time, to show thee pictures of the past. The veil of the future will also be partially lifted to thy gaze, but it is in thy power to alter what I shall there show thee. Thy deeds in the past have been judged. Thy yesterday, a furrow on the sand, has been trampled on by the returning tide of to-morrow. The future alone is open to thee," said the ghost.

They were at the outskirts of a beautiful village. There was a fragrant smell of newly-mown hay in the air. Trees, clothed in all the beautiful verdure of refulgent summer, stretched long leafy arms over the spot where Mark and his companion stood. The shades of evening hung a misty mantle around them, which the pale moon, just rising, strove in vain to disperse. A youth was walking in the moonlight, and a gentle girl leaned, tremblingly, on his arm. The light of love shone in their eyes. The garb of a peasant set off the manly form of the youth. The maid was clad in simple guise, and her long brown hair fell in careless tresses over her shoulders.

"It is! it is!" exclaimed Mark, much agitated.

"Silence," said the ghost. "Listen!"

"Alice, dear Alice," whispered the youth, "when we have money enough marriage shall free you from his persecution. Fear not, ere long I shall earn more; and some day, when poor old uncle leaves this world, I may be rich."

"Hush, dear Mark. We'll not build our hopes on the dead. I have saved a little, and we shall yet be happy. I would not we were rich."

"But, Mr. James is wealthy, and would marry you to-morrow. He loves you, too, and could make you happy. He can give you comforts which you may never look to have with me, dear Alice."

"If you love me, Mark, is not that enough for me? Could I not suffer, if it were necessary, and be happy still if you were by my side? A hut with you, Mark, would be a palace."

"Bless you!" exclaimed Mark, clasping the hand of Alice with fervour, and pressing a hot burning kiss upon her forehead. "Never shall you regret your love, Alice;" and they walked slowly away beneath the elm trees.

"Oh, let us follow them. Good ghost, pray let us follow them. I know them well. We are in my native village. The beautiful girl is Alice."

"And the youth is Mark Underwood," replied the ghost.

"I would follow them," said Mark.

"'Tis useless; whoever you see, cannot see you. We are to them no more than air; these are shadows of the past," said the ghost.

Mark, however, was about to follow the lovers, but the weight on his back pulled him to the earth.

"Take it away; gold or diamonds, remove the weight," groaned the old man, but still it pressed heavily upon him.

"I meant to be true to her, I did, indeed," said the old man, as the scene changed again.

Mark Underwood, Esq., once the peasant youth, now the wealthy manufacturer, sat at the head of his own table, in his own dining room. Around him were a crowd of sycophants, male and female. The master of the house was carrying on a pleasant flirtation with a sighing beauty, but there was no Alice Martin there.

Before Mark could speak the village was before him again. He stood in the same spot where he had seen the lovers only a few minutes before. Alice, grown into womanhood, was there, alone with her sorrows.

"I saw him, but he never heeded me. He was handsome as ever; but he turned from me in scorn, and the servants chid me from his door. I'll go no more! I'll go no more! Now that he is rich it is not likely he can love a poor girl like me. He has often said, however fortune might treat us, he would still be true to me. But he was poor, then, and now I might be a burthen to him. No one loves me now. Tired of asking me to accept the hand of Mr. James, the richest farmer in the parish, father scarcely speaks to me save in anger; and when poor dear mother died she would not have her broken-hearted Alice near her."

Thus, between sobs and tears, spoke the beautiful Alice, as she glided slowly past Mark and his unearthly guide.

"Poor soul; God forgive me!" exclaimed Mark, on his knees. "Take me away, I can see no more; I'm going mad," almost shrieked the old man; "I loved her again, I did, I did," he continued.

Once more the scene changed. They were within the walls of a prison. Mark Underwood was in a debtor's gaol. And now by his side stood Alice.

"I could not desert you when I heard you were in distress, although you drove me from you in your prosperity," said the girl.

The man groaned audibly, and big tears were in his eyes.

"I repent; I repent; but 'tis useless now; you can never love me again. You can never forgive me."

"I can," said the girl.

"You cannot love a prisoner, a debtor, an outcast from society."

"Ah, you do not know a woman's heart. I can love you now. We are equal again. We are both poor now. Can *you* love Alice again?"

"I can; but I have said it before and proved false. I hate myself; I am wretched, miserable, mad—go home poor girl, go home," said the man in terrible accents.

"I shall soon have no home except in heaven. This visit to you, which has cost me a day and a night of hard walking, may rob me of the last spark of a father's love. Think of our younger days! Think of your promises! Think!" said the girl, looking earnestly into the prisoner's face.

"I do, and am frantic; but I may yet atone," said the man, squeezing her hand and kissing it.

At this moment a turnkey bade Alice depart.

"Stop, stop," cried Mark. "I loved her; I loved her then; I meant to atone. Let her know that, at least," he said; but the prison and its occupants vanished.

Once again the village appeared. It was a cold winter night. The snow was on the ground. No living form save that of a woman was visible.

"I cannot bear it," said Alice, as she hurried by the spot where Mark and the ghost were standing.

"Driven from home, footsore, disgraced by the tongue of scandal, weak, cold, houseless. It is too much for me, and how do I know that he will even now love me again! Oh! no, no, I am going mad."

"He will; he does;" cried poor Mark Underwood, the miser miller.

"Follow her and see still more of the effects of riches. Go, man, and see what thou hast done," said the ghost, and Mark hastened after the wretched woman.

The noise of the Old Brook was heard in the distance, as it fell from the mill dam, and roared beneath the water-wheel. Louder and louder became the noise of the torrent. Nearer and nearer approached the woman towards the roaring river.

"I could save her now but for this horrible load," cried Mark, satisfied of her wild intent. "Take it away; take it away!" he shrieked; but the demon pressed still heavier upon him.

The ghost was by his side to taunt and to warn. "'Tis the gold you dug out of the common; you'll want it; gold is your idol, old man."

"Not now; never again," shrieked Mark. "Oh heaven, remove the weight."

They were now close to the mill dam. A gleam of moonlight played upon the river. The water-wheel clicked in solemn regularity. Mark was within reach of the flying maiden. He put out his hand to save her; once more the load on his back dragged him to the ground.

"Save her! oh, save her! dear, dear Alice!" rung over the waters; but the Old Brook had received the suicide, and the mill wheel went round, and the water rolled on as before.

When old Mark looked up again he was by a death bed. He saw himself die. He heard exclamations of joy from many lips at the blessed release the world had in such a death. He saw all his riches wasted and sold by quarrelling relatives. He saw the demons he had seen on the oak tree filling the death chamber. "This," said the ghost, "is a glimpse of the future: be warned in time, lest it be one of the past."

"Take away the weight; it burns me; it pierces my heart; I'm dying. Mercy! mercy!" cried Mark.

"Why, whatever's the matter, Mr. Underwood?" said Sarah, his housekeeper, who had just returned from her evening visit, and found Mark lying on the floor gasping for breath.

"Whatever have you been a doing, sir?" she said, as she proceeded to lift him up.

"Oh, Sarah, Sarah! where am I? I'm not dead, am I? Take off the weight; take it off," cried the terrified Mark.

"Why, you're where I left you, sir. Dear a me, where do you think you are?"

"Light the candles, but don't leave me," he said, seizing her by the arm.

"I'd sooner be poor Sarah Maggs than rich Mr. Underwood, after all," muttered Sarah to herself.

The candles lighted, Mark shook himself, pinched himself, stood upright, sat down, walked, stamped, and went through other similar investigations into his physical position, and at last came to the conclusion that he had been released from the ghosts—for Mark would never believe that he had only been dreaming.

Perhaps it was all the better he should discard the dream and adhere to the more terrible idea that he had really been in ghostly company. For, from that moment, he became a different man, and he has now the credit of being the best and most hospitable landlord in the neighbourhood. The year after he went out with the ghosts, he built that fine house on the hill yonder, where Christmas now brings some of its happiest moments. The Genius of Christmas Past presides there, bringing every year its sirloins of beef, its pies and puddings, its capons, its turkeys, its geese, its wassail bowls, its yule logs, and its thousand other good things, all to the big house of the old miller. The great festival is observed in every detail, and there are little presents for all who call there on boxing day. Mark has no poor relations, and the mill is not always at work as you see it now.

A neat tomb has arisen over the grave of poor Alice Martin, five miles above the dam, and every Christmas eve an old man is seen in the churchyard,

some say, kneeling by the tombstone. Old Sarah knows how true the story is, for ever since that evening when she found her master in such a dreadful fright, Mark Underwood, the miller, has been missing for several hours on every successive New Year's eve, and the white mare and the little phaeton are always waiting for their master near the turnpike at the village, five miles from the mill dam, when the Christmas bells ring joyous peals at eventide.

The Old Brook which turned Underwood's mill did a like service for other millers who dwelt on its banks, and it assisted in other mechanical operations as it wandered on to its destination. I have seen it, when the floods came down from the hills, rolling, and boiling, and surging like an angry sea, and spreading itself out over the country for miles, until trees, in the distance, looked like ships on the ocean. At these times, all the brooks I used to know were boisterous torrents. The Old Brook was often my miniature Nile, and the little ones Clydes, and Thames, and Trents, and my fancy put ships on the torrents, and manned and freighted them with men and cargoes of the most imaginary and imaginative description.

Beautiful brooks I used to know! Yours is the friendship that never changes, the companionship that knows no guile. Sometimes even now I hear your songs of peace and love and happiness, rising above the noise and din of mighty cities, until the dun atmosphere is filled with rural music, and the roaring streets are "Brooks I used to know." Blessed power of memory! thy pictures are beyond all art; thy treasures are priceless.

GOING UP AND COMING DOWN.

What erroneous ideas people have of their neighbours; and yet how positively they speak of their doings; how closely they are posted up as to all their worldly concerns. Mr. Johnson is getting up in the world. Oh, there can be no mistake about it. He visits at the banker's. His wife brought him money, wears pretty morning dresses, goes to no end of evening parties, and has bonnets direct from Paris. The Marshalls opposite are poor to the Johnsons. Indeed, Marshall was never anybody particular. He commenced in a very small way, and there was never any money in the Marshall family. He may have saved a little. It was thought, at one time, that he had an interest in some London concern, but that was a *ruse* to improve his credit. Oh, bless you, he's not doing much. Mrs. Johnson wouldn't see Mrs. M. the last time she called. Well, of course, people must maintain their position in society becomingly.

Have you heard the news? You knew the Johnsons? Yes—the people belonging to the yellow brougham and greys. "Up a tree:" debts, £30,000; assets, £200. Always thought it would come to that. What else could they expect? The company they kept, the people they visited, the dresses, the dinner parties—nothing could stand it. What a contrast to the

Marshalls, at whom, it is said, Mrs. Johnson was disgusted because they walked to the Infirmary concert, and left their bonnets in the ante-room! Such paltry pride must come down. Now Mr. Marshall is a steady, enterprising, industrious man, and a successful man too: he has always been getting up in the world. They say he has just given £30,000 for the Banterton Estate.

Neighbourly gossip like this is not new to you, my friendly reader—if you know any thing of life. It is the way of the world, all the world over. Your neighbours always know what you are doing—how you are doing. If you get on in the world, they knew you were doing so. If you go down, they knew you were going; they knew your false pride would have a fall some day or other. I am acquainted with a man who used to dine regularly at Johnson's, the people mentioned in my opening paragraph. I have heard him boast of their friendship and talk of their dinners. Two days after Johnson had failed (or made an ascent up a particular tree, known in modern parlance as the friend or enemy of gentlemen in all kinds of difficulties), this same diner out was amongst those who kicked the fallen man: "What could Johnson expect? Why the fellow used to put seven or eight sorts of wine on the dinner-table!"

There is all the difference between going up and coming down the hill. It is hard to get up, if your chain is a heavy one and you cannot carry the dragging portion of it; for then nobody offers to assist you. But get fairly hold of the links that dragged at starting—get them thoroughly under your own control, mount easily, and you will find

many a hand held out to help you up. "We must help one another, neighbour: mutual aid is a duty." Stumble in your ascent, get the chain under your feet, and fall. Where are the helping hands now? Assisting those who are not guilty of stumbling. And oh! how fast you go down the hill, though you cling, at first, with the strength of Hercules and the patience of Job. Everybody seems to have legs to kick and arms to thrust you down where hands were once stretched out to help. "God helps those who help themselves, neighbour." Philosophy varies with circumstances.

But persevere still, my friends, for all that. Get up despite the kicks. Learn to do without the helps. The struggle may be severe after a fall, and though your rising neighbour quotes it in deprecation of your position, there is truth in the proverb as to whom God helps. There is hope for the patient and persevering if they continue to hold on and to hope on. Lilly, the cowherd, was knighted. Alfieri, trying to get up the hill for twenty years, was thrust back by his own father, but the poet got to the very top in the end. Chatterton was trampled upon. Another effort, one more clutch at the rock, and he might have stood on a pinnacle next the sky. But he was sorely tried, and his chain was a heavy one. I never read Chatterton but I think of the eagle which, chained to the earth by the sudden spring of a trap, struggled with its relentless foe, and at last carried it, chain, and stake, and all, to a mountain top, and died. John Hunter educated himself. Everybody tried to push George Stephenson back, but he held on like a

giant, and if he was bruised a little at first, he constructed an engine that carried him up over the mightiest obstacles. Voiture was the son of a vintner. In early life Akenside was lamed by the fall of his father's cleaver. Rousseau was a cobbler's son. Take heart, then, ye that are heavy laden. Never mind the kicks. The scoffer says true, though he thrust thee back with the proverb in his mouth, "God helps the man that helps himself."

The most trivial stumble, at starting, will always make the journey up hill one of considerable trouble and difficulty. The mean and wicked people are too numerous to make it otherwise. They show their gorilla faces and their cloven hoofs in all societies. When a man most wants sympathy and friendship, they give him the cold shoulder, served up with unkind nods and winks. When he asks for bread, he is considerately treated to a stone. I knew young Winterton. He was a clever little fellow. He could write. His friends admitted he had ability, and by their advice he published. His work was a failure. He fancied he was getting up the hill so nicely, and just as he seemed to be mounting, he fell. It was a sad blow to genius. Winterton lay bruised of heart, and was kicked down the hill, without a friend to save, or whisper one sweet word of hope. He soon found himself at the bottom of the hill. But there was genius within him, and he started once more. This time he was successful, and on his second ascent his only stoppages were occasioned by the crowds of "friends," who would take him by the hand, whether or not.

"All own the chief, when fortune owns the cause."

When my young friend fell, he was "a presumptuous fellow, who was sure to find his level." When he rose again, the same good citizens, with upturned eyes, exclaimed something laudatory of perseverance, and said, "Virtue is its own reward."

How many heart-aches might be averted did we fall down less often before the idol of Success. How much more happiness there would be in the world if we cheered each other on, and (if we did not help up), at least refrained from thrusting back those who are striving for the upward way. There is many a man, worthy of a crown, who falls and is kept back because he has simply been unfortunate. We should learn to sympathise with those who need it. However much we disliked a man, if we saw him fall in the street and wound himself, we should feel more inclined to apply a plaister than a kick. The worst of us would not probe the wound, and torture the fallen one. Let our grudge be ever so old, ever so well founded, we should not leave him to bleed and die unheeded. And yet that is not exactly kindness. We don't like to see the blood. We sicken at the sight of the wound. There is a sort of fellow-feeling which I cannot describe, that prompts us to put away the painful sight and heal the wound. But what, after all, is a bodily wound to the laceration of a sensitive mind—to the wounding, by calumny, of an honest and upright heart? Oh! that men could see the wounds they make in a high, sensitive, noble nature. Internal injuries, the doctors always tell you, are the most painful and dangerous.

Let us think more about these social wounds!

THE RUINED COTTAGE.

In a village, which I shall call Marshwood, situated on the north-east coast of England, are to be found the remains of a picturesque little cottage, which never fail to attract the attention of lovers of the beautiful. The roof has long since fallen before the silent attacks of Time, and made way for the aspiring foliage which creeps up through the desolate rooms. The paneless windows are filled with leafy parasites, through which wanders the evening wind with murmurings not unlike the music of an æolian harp. The chimney, from which in years gone by went up the smoky messenger of life within, looks like a mourning plume, set up in token of sadness, large masses of ivy overhanging the crumbling stack in clustering clumps of whispering leaves. The chimney itself is occupied in summer by a tribe of martins, and in the winter an old fashioned owl takes up his quarters there, and makes strange sounds during his midnight perambulations.

The villagers, however, give another version of the nightly occupancy of the cottage. They assert that it is haunted, and have long since settled any doubts upon the matter by ocular demonstration : they have seen the ghost, and one of the oldest inhabitants knew the former occupier of the cottage

so well that she can trace a likeness in the shadow which at night wanders through the crumbling cottage. The spirit assumes the shape of a weeping girl, and (if we believe the villagers, and not their worthy pastor) has been seen, at one time or another, by nearly every member of the rural fraternity of Marshwood. And no wonder the villagers should have conjured up the ghostly image of the former occupier of the cottage : the site of the old house, the story of its ruin, the music of the distant sea, the romantic character of the surrounding country—all tend to favour those longings after the mysterious which exist in every bosom.

On an autumnal evening, when the moon is just spreading her silvery mist over the hazy landscape, and tinging the rolling waves of the distant sea; when Old Ocean softens his voice down to a whisper, and scarcely moves the pebbles on the beach; when the village is hushed and the last glimmering light has disappeared from the cottage window; when the ivy leaves rustle about the ruined house, and the tall trees throw deep black shadows over the footpath; when the crumbling walls of the once happy cot receive the softened light of the moonbeams, and that mysterious sensation of awe and admiration which is created on contemplating solemn scenes like these steals through the soul: at such a time, who could not complete the mournfully fascinating picture by introducing a fairy-like form weeping over images of desolation?

Mabel Hedgeston, whose spirit the villagers say haunts the ruined cottage, was the adopted daughter of a Marshwood fisherman, who rescued her from

the wreck of a French schooner when she was an infant. Who her parents were, or to what country they belonged, was never ascertained; but the child grew up as the daughter of the fisherman, adopted his name, and was christened Mabel, after his own wife.

As she advanced towards womanhood, Mabel became the pet of the village. The boys were all her companions, ready to second her in any undertaking. The girls (notwithstanding that she outrivalled them all in personal charms) were her sworn friends. The men loved her with the affection of fathers, and the women extended to her an undivided maternal watchfulness. In fact, although, Hedgeston the fisherman, and Hedgeston's wife asserted a prior claim upon her affections, Mabel was the daughter of the village. And well did she fulfil her duties to her extensive parentage. She nursed the sick, comforted the distressed, and went about a very angel of peace and mercy; and there was an elasticity in her gait, and an animation about her manner withal, which brought sunshine with her to every household. She was not what would be generally considered absolutely beautiful neither; but there was such an unconscious expression of benevolence in her fair face, such a depth of love in her large blue eyes, such a grace in all her movements, that left in the memory of all who once beheld her an image of purity and goodness.

Amongst the boys in the village, Mabel's constant attendant was George, the blacksmith's son, who had as honest a face as ever caught the glowing radiance of welded iron, and as good a

heart as ever melted in the sunshine of the softening influence of woman.

George and Mabel growing up together, almost under the same roof, their sentiments and feelings became nearly akin, and love, engendered by sympathy, had in the progress of time united their hearts as firmly as the glowing metal which George joined every day on the ringing anvil. To be brief, one fine May morning the rural rites of a village wedding mingled with the joyous observances of May-day, and the bells of Marshwood church carried the tidings far out to sea that George and Mabel were married.

Mabel's cottage was the neatest and the prettiest in the village, and there could not be a more agreeable sight than, on a summer evening, to see George, fresh from his daily toil, smoking his long clay pipe, and watching his wife moving amongst her beautiful shrubs and flowers—the Eve of a little Paradise.

Time flew swiftly by with the young couple, and soon brought a curly-headed youngster to climb up George's sturdy knees — a fresh link in the love chain of the lovers—the crowning consummation of their domestic bliss. Oh, from what a dazzling height of joy they had to fall! Truly the future is veiled from us in mercy.

Two years had passed away; four-and-twenty months of continual and continued happiness, when, on a stormy night in November, a strange vessel hove in sight of Marshwood. Although she had every appearance of an English man-of-war, the fishermen could not make her out. In the

darkness, she made signals of distress, and, with the bravest in the village, George put out to sea. In a little while their cheering shouts, in reply to the prayers which went up from the shore, died away, and nothing was heard on shore but the solemn booming of the minute-gun, like a knell for departing souls. Then the cannon ceased to mingle its dreadful tones with the moaning of the sea, and the light which had glimmered from the bow of the little Marshwood boat, like a star in a clouded sky, disappeared in the darkness. But the watchers watched and listened until long after nought was seen but the black heaving sea, and nought was heard but its dull heavy beating of the shore. Daylight came, but it brought back neither boat nor crew to the longing villagers. Daylight came, but it disclosed to the anxious gaze of wives, mothers, fathers, and brothers, neither ship, nor vestige of ship, nor boat.

Months passed away, and Winter came with its snows and misty vapours. The winds whistled around Mabel's cottage, and roared amongst the trees, which swung to and fro in the storms like creaking skeletons. Poor Mabel wandered about the desolate place, carrying her boy and her load of sorrow until she was fain to rest her weary head at night and dream of phantom ships, whence there was no escape for her faithful George. The villagers tried to console the unhappy woman, but she would not be comforted. "Wait," they said, "until Spring, and there may be hope for George's safe return, when more ships come into the neighbouring ports." Wait she did, with peaceful

resignation, but she grew weaker and weaker as Despair took possession of the region of Hope. The ruddy glow of health left her cheek, and her boy grew sickly and ill. Without the strong arm of George to repair the cottage and defy the searching storms, the once well-thatched roof gave way before the rain, and little streams of water made curious shapes on the white walls of poor Mabel's chamber, where the live long night burnt a simple beacon of Hope to light the wanderer home, should he ever return from his long, long journey. Winter departed and Spring came, as if to rescue nature from death and desolation. But George did not return with the Spring, and his boy died with Nature's resurrection, and was buried when the first primroses peeped forth beneath the shady hedgerow.

Weeds grew up in Mabel's garden and choked the straggling flowers, and Mabel wandered amongst them, drooping her head, like a lily blasted by an untimely frost. At all hours Mabel was met on the sea shore, listening to the murmurings of the water and gazing into vacancy; or seen at her little chamber window, watching with eager gaze any distant sail which chanced to show its white wings against the blue horizon. At all hours she was moving about the scenes of her past happiness like a disconsolate Peri, searching for that which should restore her to lost delights.

For two long years, during which time the neighbours contributed all their little luxuries of food and raiment to her support, Mabel continued her earthly wanderings. In the second year

the poor woman's mind gave way beneath its weight of woe, and the good people, who had adopted her in her infancy, took up their abode in her untended cottage, to protect her in her second childhood. But poor unhappy Mabel did not long require their parental solicitude. One Autumn evening, when the sun was declining behind the tinted waves of the ocean, she sat at the window of the little chamber (where she and George, in happier days, had watched the declining sun) looking away into the far off distance. A quiet serene smile played upon her features, and the dawn of reason once more lighted up her beautiful face. "At last! at last!" she said, motioning to the good, large-hearted woman who had adopted her, "At last he comes to his forlorn Mabel," said the poor lunatic, lifting up her thin arms and staggering from her seat. "Who said he would not return? My dear, dear George! Now we shall be happy again—dear, dear George!" The sun sunk behind the billows, Mabel's spirit fled as the sunbeams departed, and her poor worn out body fell into the arms of the sobbing mother.

Many more summers came and went; the ruined cottage fell more and more into decay, and the weeds grew apace; the old men of the village had rested from their labours, and the boys and girls had grown up into men and women—when, at the close of a summer's day there came into Marshwood a weak, infirm old man, attired in the garb of a sailor, tottering upon a staff. As much of his face as was visible from beneath his long grey beard was sunburnt and tanned, and there were scars on it

which told of service in the wars. The old man, unheeded by the poor, simple villagers, sought the cottage of George and Mabel Hedgeston. The next day the villagers were horrified at finding the dead body of the stranger lying at the foot of the gravestone of Mabel and her child. Upon the person of the veteran was found an honourable discharge from the King's service of George Hedgeston, third mate of one of his Majesty's men-of-war. The body, from other circumstances, was proved to be that of poor Mabel's husband, George, the blacksmith's son, who had been impressed into the King's service by a most disgraceful *ruse* on the night when the strange ship stood off Marshwood bay.

LOCKING UP.

It is pleasant to lock up your money box when you feel that its contents have been well earned. Locking the stable door when the horse is gone is not quite so satisfactory. Locking up the counting house, for the last time prior to your annual summer holiday, has agreeable sensations. There is much that is gratifying about locking your door on a winter's night, and leaving cold and damp and wind and dreary thoughts in the street —if you don't get troubled in your mind about some poor wretch who may seek the shelter of your door step. But the most interesting and generally most agreeable locking up newspaper people feel is a locking up about which the general public know little or nothing.

One of the most important phases through which a newspaper travels in the course of production is its "locking up." You dont know what I mean, Mrs. Partington? You think it strange that a newspaper should be locked up prior to publication, Mrs. P.? If you lived next door to a publishing office which sent forth a newspaper at an early hour in the morning, you would soon know what locking up is. When you were suddenly aroused from a refreshing slumber by a knocking and a hammering and a clamouring, and

you asked your venerable Mr. P. what in the world that dreadful noise was, he would tell you (if he knows anything about such things) that the printers were locking up. And when this knocking was succeeded by a dragging about of some heavy material and a shuffling of feet, and then another knocking of a shorter duration than the former, he would tell you the formes were on the machine. [No, Mrs. P., the formes are not to sit upon.] And when you were sensible of a bumping and a rolling and a rattling of machinery, he would tell you "they are at press"—one of the very few blissful moments in the labour of those who conduct newspapers.

When the editor has written his multifarious ideas and supervised and edited the contributions of his crowd of correspondents; when the reporters have transcribed the last of their notes, and all this has gone through the compositors' hands, and grown into columns of dull looking type; when this has been read and corrected, and arranged under its respective heads of foreign news, literature, general, local, &c.; when some of it has been printed off, and the last pages are being made ready for the press; then comes the period of locking up, which all concerned in the production of the paper look forward to all the time between each diurnal or weekly issue. This locking up is the fastening safely together the columns of the paper in iron frames, which printers call chases, the completion of which operation releases what may be called the thinking part of the establishment, and leaves nothing to be done but the mere mechanical work of printing the paper and sending

it forth to the world. The process of locking up is accompanied by much hammering with mallets and much planing with planers, in order that the type may adhere firmly together and be even on the surface. Bells chiming on a summer evening, the melody of birds, the whisperings of the wind through trees in summer, the rippling murmur of running brooks, make charming music, but after the fatigues and anxieties of a publication day in a newspaper office, the clamour and clash of locking up is sweeter and more soothing than either bell music, bird music, brook music, or any other kind of music whatsoever.

To one uninitiated in the mysteries of the art which Caxton did so much to perfect, the extraordinary commands and inquiries of the overseer, whose duty it is to "make up," as the final arrangement of the type before going to press is called, would be exceedingly puzzling, and sometimes ludicrous. "Who's on that horrible tragedy?" is a query somewhat startling in its nature, as is also the command to "finish that dreadful murder, which is keeping two galleys waiting." [Galleys, by the bye, are what I may call frames, made sometimes of wood, but mostly of metal, to receive the type before it is placed in the iron embrace of the "chases"—very different sort of things, Mrs. P., either to ships, or the galleys where crime is punished in France.] But these are ordinary commands and interrogations in a printing office, a short time before the locking up. Yet I have seen a stranger stand in utter bewilderment at a running fire such as this:—"Let that 'Colliery Accident' be revised, and pull that

'French Ambassador in Turkey,' and set up 'An Outlawed Bankrupt' in brevier caps; finish that 'Great Battle between the Austrians and the Allies,'" and a host of similarly inexplicable orders from overseer to typos; whilst the reader asks for a proof of "The explosion in a Coal Mine," as though he wanted to see a collection of dead bodies and mangled limbs; and the editor, intent on his leaders, demands another proof of "The Settlement of the Eastern Question" (as though he very much doubted such a desirable consummation), at the same time suggesting that the "cross head" of Mr. Gladstone shall be replaced by a "full head," which, by the bye, is anything but a reflection upon the intellectual powers or congenial temper of the distinguished statesman, however paradoxical this statement may seem in connection with the suggested re-arrangement of Mr. Gladstone's cranium.

I can assure my readers that this settlement of Eastern questions, this finishing of murders, this revising of accidents, and proofs of awful calamities, is perfectly intelligible to the printers, and means anything but the committal of dreadful deeds, or the final arrangement of European questions. And such commands and observations do not create a laugh from their apparent extravagance, but the work goes on amidst the blazing glare of gas with wonderful speed, everybody intent on what he has in hand, until those great chases are put round the long leaden columns of type, and the locking up begins. Then faces relax from their previous sternness; compositors wipe the perspiration from their brows; editors, subs,

reporters, put on their cloaks and take up their walking-sticks, and light their cigars and go home, and soon afterwards the newspaper—the history of the world for a day or a week, as the case may be —the story of our progress and civilisation, our crimes, our charities, our battles, our victories, our sins of omission and commission—is in the hands of a crowd of readers, perhaps not one of whom ever thinks about the labour of head and hand the broad wet sheet has cost its producers.

HOW I NEARLY LOST A FORTUNE.

Old Manton was a second uncle of mine, and, being very rich, was a very interesting gentleman to his numerous relatives. Indeed, certain important members of my own family, in the anticipation of fat legacies, fawned upon him most perseveringly, treating his eccentric humours, which were not always pleasant, as exceedingly characteristic and agreeable oddities. My brother Timothy was especially sycophantish in his attentions upon the old man, reading the newspapers to him, aiding the housekeeper and the doctor in their necessary administrations to his comforts, and doing any servile drudgery which he thought might gain him the rich Manton's good golden opinion.

For my own part, I had neither the patience nor the inclination to win the old man's favour by studied acts of assumed affection. I own to often entertaining the hope that uncle Manton would remember me in his will, but my feelings of independence were of too wide and broad a character to enable me to subject them to the restraint which was necessary ere I could hope to compete with Timothy. At the same time, I had longings which money alone could compass. I was often under the influence of that sort of boyish chivalry

which I dare say most people have felt at some early period of their life. I had a sort of Quixotish desire to see the world and be somebody of importance amongst its citizens. That wish did not extend to wandering about in a case of old iron, seeking distressed maidens who sighed for freedom in giants' castles ; but it included that roving propensity which brought Don Quixote de la Mancha into so much trouble in conflicts with windmills and other imaginary foes to his greatness. I wanted to see life ; not that I knew what seeing life really meant, beyond getting away from the town in which one was bred into the towns of larger dimensions, mixing with strangers, and being able some day to return home again a man of importance—one who had seen the world. To do all this I was practical enough and man enough to know that money would be required ; yet I could not descend to mean obsequiousness to procure this passport to the world's high places : Timothy could, and so, for a time, Timothy thrived.

Falsehood, however, does not always win. Eventually Manton took the proper gauge of Timothy, and, not long before the old man's death, made his will in my favour. The housekeeper and my cold calculating brother were bound in a compact to serve each other, and the change in the old man's ideas and actions was soon discovered. They worked upon the poor man (I call him poor, for his very riches were his greatest burthens,) in every possible way to win a codicil to that last will and testament which left me heir to his pretty little estate, with its farms and its fox covers.

In the meantime, securing the other string to

his bow, as he thought, Timothy—misguided silly Timothy — suddenly exhibited great affection for me, and I was exalted from the lowest stool in the house to the highest and softest cushioned chair. But Timothy was deep, as the dark sullen river which ran through Mr. Manton's estate, and Mrs. Housekeeper as cunning as the anglers who fished therein.

"He will live until noon and no longer," said the doctor in a whisper to the housekeeper, who had just given the sick man his breakfast. "No power can save him. Let him have whatever he requires. Old age has lived its longest. I will be here again at eleven."

The doctor went his way, and then commenced the working of as wickedly ingenious a plot as could enter into the cogitations of the most practised sinners. In reply to every message that morning, relative to Mr. Manton's health, cheering reports were given, so that nobody might linger in the house. At ten o'clock the lawyer was sent for, and told to wait in the library—"by Mr. Manton's directions"—until he was wanted. At the same time an architect and surveyor was sent for, with instructions to confer with me as to the most desirable alterations which could be made in the arrangement of the outhouses and grounds, especially with regard to the ornamental bridge over the river in front of the house.

"I would rather see Mr. Manton myself," I said, "before I presume even to listen to suggested improvements of his property ; this may be merely a whim of sickness, which ought not to be regarded —besides, I am too young to know what ought to be done."

"It was his particular request that he should not be disturbed for two hours; and whim or no whim, he desired me to do what I have done, and I leave it to your own self, sir, whether you care to displease him," said the wily housekeeper. "Hear what the surveyor says, and then see Mr. Manton, *if* I may be allowed to suggest," continued the subtle confidant of an undecided, weak master.

That seemed reasonable enough, and I assented. Anxious, of course, to make as many alterations as he could, whether they were improvements or not, the surveyor brought his measuring materials, and was soon busily engaged, with me by his side, making calculations for a new bridge, a new carriage drive, and other extensive changes in the exterior of Manton House. So far the diabolical plot of Timothy and his she-devil partner worked well.

"I tell you, sir—God forbid that I should say anything against your own blood, my dear master; but I tell you, sir, he is doing most outrageous things."

"Well, well, Sarah, it is too late now," the old man muttered, turning uneasily in the bed. "But if I thought he was ungrateful—if I thought he was other than he seems to be, I'd—I'd——"

The sentence remained unfinished; the speaker was exhausted. My brother Timothy listened at the door ready to summon the lawyer, or be of any other service to his comrade. Oh, what fiends money can make of mortals!

The clock, on the heavy oaken staircase, marked the waning moments in slow and measured strokes; the ivy tapped at the diamond-shaped panes of the

windows; the sound of child voices came up from the distant village; a blackbird piped out its mellow music in answer to its mate ; the scheming woman, who waited for a return of the fading strength of poor suffering Manton, held her throbbing heart as though she feared it would burst ; my brother Timothy's breath came thick and fast, until his lips were parched, and his mouth was dry. Oh, anxious guilty moments, how slowly did ye limp away!

The sick man revived, and the she-tempter whispered in his ear that even now his heir was surveying his property, and planning alterations.

"No, no; not before the breath is out of my body," exclaimed the old man, feebly raising himself in bed.

"Where is he? Let me see him," he cried, gaining strength by excitement.

"There! there!" said the woman, drawing aside the bed curtains, and pointing to where I stood with the surveyor. "There is your favourite, planning a new bridge over the river."

"Oh, ingrate scoundrel! Oh, well painted picture of innocence!" cried poor Manton, choking with passion. "Send for my lawyer ; quick, there's not a moment to lose; quick, quick, quick," almost shrieked the deluded dying man of wealth.

In a moment the legal gentleman was in the room, and Timothy, with his handkerchief to his eyes, leaned over the bed, and sobbed at the ingratitude of his brother.

"A codicil—the will—my property—alterations —the bridge—the will—surveyors—ingratitude— mercy!" gasped the old man, in rambling repetition, and gazing around him with the most appealing glances.

The will was immediately produced. Pen and ink were soon at work. The old man raised himself once more, and commenced to speak.

"I will—I revoke—I leave all my property—the bridge — alterations — ungrateful—before the breath was out of my body—could not wait—before I was—dead."

As the last word escaped the lips of the poor old man, he fell forward with his head upon his breast. The clock struck eleven—old Manton had died an hour before his time.

LITTLE MILLY.

Somebody has described frost on the window pane as a volume of Nature's fairy tales. Hans Christian Andersen, in his simple, modest way, has told us the story of the Snow Queen, and this, combined with the poetical description of the icy filagree work which often adorns our windows in Winter, has suggested to me the idea of writing a little tale about Snow Fairies. With this acknowledgment of my inspiration, I will now proceed to relate something which, though it be fiction, has a child-heroine not, I am sorry to say, altogether untruthfully drawn:—

In that undefined era, described by many an ancient story teller as "once upon a time," a Snow Fairy came all the way to England from that cold northern region called Lapland, in which country fairies, in snow garments, glide to and fro, beneath the northern lights, wearing crowns of frost crystals. She chose the Winter season for her visit for obvious reasons (she might have melted away in Summer time), and took her journey in the chariot of the North Wind, who leaves his icy abode during several months in the year to breathe upon the British isles. Methinks it were a grand sight to see the giant wind, at home, driving mountains of ice far out to sea, shouting over mighty

plains of snow, shaking hardy fir trees, and scattering the snow, in crystal showers, around the Laplander's sleigh.

The occasion of the visit of my snow fairy to our country was this. A relative of hers had forfeited her fairy home by becoming mortal, through marrying an English seaman, who had penetrated those far off regions. The fairy who had thus given up her home beneath the northern lights for a mortal one, sailed away in the seaman's ship, and lived in England. Soon, however, she became a widow, and, in the course of two years afterwards, died herself, leaving homeless one child, a sweet girl, known as Little Milly. Eventually the orphan fell into the hands of an impostor—an old beggar woman, who used to let out and hire children for the purposes of her trade of mendicancy. She was a horrible sort of creature this same old woman, quite a witch in appearance, and she lived in a wretched dirty house in a gloomy back street, where officers of the law were seldom seen, and when they did condescend to visit the locality, never went away without some miserable prisoner. Poor Little Milly used to be sent out early in the morning with instructions to return at a certain hour at night, and bring so much money, or its value. If the child failed to fulfil these commands, to the letter, she was sorely beaten by her drunken mistress. Some how or other my Lapland fairy heard of this—perhaps the North Wind told her of it—and she determined to rescue her little relative and punish her tormentor. But there is a higher power than that possessed by fairies.

It was Christmas Day. Little Milly started

early on her weary mission ; for there was no holiday for the beggar children. She begged and begged; but being so much taken up with their own affairs, so wrapped up in their own pleasures, few people heeded the little sufferer. The bells rung merry peals; people in fine clothes went in crowds to church; boys and girls ran to and fro thinking of the Christmas pudding ; but Little Milly wandered along, weeping tears which were nigh freezing as they fell. Night came ; the sky was thick with stars, and the Waits and the Mummers were in the streets—as was also Little Milly, but without the daily sum made up. When the service at church was over, she went inside the porch and sat down, trying to shield herself from the cold. The North Wind knew she was there, and he passed by the porch without entering, although he shouted high up in the steeple, and shook the church doors, and piled up heaps of snow in out of the way corners, and then scattered them about in white clouds, that looked like ghosts in the churchyard.

At length Little Milly lay down to rest, and gradually the wind was lulled into soft murmurs that stole amongst the bells and made sweet music where before was heard nothing but moaning and wailing. The church doors opened, and a light shone round the altar. The organ was pealing a requiem for the dead, and angels were singing songs of joy for souls which had safely passed through the Valley of Death. The antique heads that had previously grinned at Little Milly in the porch became living faces, radiant with glory, some of them cherubs, who joined in the chaunts of the angelic choir. " How beautiful,"

whispered Little Milly, and angels wafted her spirit to Heaven.

Soon after the wind moaned about the church as before; the heads in the porch grinned again, and looked hideous; darkness brooded over the graveyard, covering, like the snow, the last homes of rich and poor, without regard to rank. But the wind had no more cold, old carvings no more horrors, darkness no more terrors for Little Milly.

It was not until morning that the Snow Fairy discovered where her infant relative had spent the night, and the North Wind brought her to the spot just in time to see the dead body of a child removed from the church porch by the parish beadle, and followed to the nearest public house by a crowd of boys. Nobody but the Snow Fairy saw that, in death, Little Milly smiled beneath a wreath of icicles, as her mother had smiled, in life, with a brow encircled by Nature's fairy frost work.

It was a bitterly cold day that on which poor Milly, to whom the angels had been so kind, was found dead in the church porch. The North Wind blew his hardest, and the Snow Fairy filled the air with sharp particles of ice that cut the faces of all who went out into the streets. Snow was piled up in great hills, into which coaches and carriages were deluded and upset; men and women were frozen on the highway roads; ships were wrecked at sea; chimneys fell and trees were torn up by their roots. For the North Wind was in his most boisterous mood, and the Snow Fairy, in the height of her revengeful passions, tempted him into deeds of death. Sweeping her long garments over the town, she

breathed freezing breath upon it until the whole place was almost as cold as Lapland. She passed over the house of the old hag who had so ill used Milly, and there cast down handsful of snow crystals from her crown, shook her long snow robes, and breathed upon the windows until they were darkened. That night the sinful woman, in the midst of her lonesome drunken revelry, was bound to her chair with icy bonds sealed by the hand of Death.

But people kept their holiday all the same, laughing, singing, and making merry; for they knew not of the story of Little Milly—how she had suffered, how she had died, and how she had been revenged. Indeed, it is little they know in large towns of the moving stories and tragedies which are daily enacted by living men and women and starving children. Surely it is some consolation to think that, if there really are no fairies, there are good angels about us, for the world has much need of them. And oh! what a blessing it is to remember, during the great festival of Christmas, the peculiar claims which children have upon us: it was our Saviour who said "Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not."

A THOUSAND YEARS HENCE.

Should you ask me whence these stories?
Whence these legends and traditions,
With the odours of the forest,
With the dew and damp of meadows,
With the curling smoke of wigwams,
With the rushing of great rivers,
And their wild reverberations,
As of thunder in the mountains,
I should answer, I should tell you,
* * * * * *

Longfellow's Hiawatha.

Should you ask me of the burthen,
Of the burthen of my story,
In the metre of the poet,
Longfellow, the mighty songster,
What I dreamt, and where I dreamt it,
In my bedroom, in the garret,
Lodging of most *literati*,
Where the sparrow and opechee
Flutter 'gainst the little window?
I should answer, I should tell you,
There are places more attractive
When the sun shines in the meadows
Round about the noisy city,
"In the green and silent valleys
By the pleasant water courses,"
Where the wind plays with the flowers,

Ripples on the murm'ring river,
Gilds the noble rocks St. Vincent,
Gilds the tree tops in the Leigh Woods,
"White in Winter, green in Summer,"
Where the wind is ever sighing,
Singing songs, Æolian music—
Grand in Winter, sweet in Summer.

"If still further you should ask me,"
Saying, Oh! where did you dream this?
Tell us ere you write a line more,
"I should answer your inquiries
Straightway in such words as follow."

In a hayfield, near a river,
By a cot, bedeck'd with roses,
By a murm'ring silv'ry river,
Where the silent water lily
Nods its head among the sedges,
And the drooping weeping willow
Weeps bright dew drops in the waters—
I, a rural rambler, sleeping,
Sleeping on sweet smelling hay mow,
Saw in Fancy's fairy bowers
The strange vision which now follows,
Vision of a Fast vast Future.

'Twas Bristol a thousand years hence,
Bristol, birthplace of genius,
Great in mighty money makers,
Great in mighty merchant princes:
Oh! it was a changëd city—
Man nor maid I knew not in it,
Streets, and houses too, were alter'd,
Chang'd as if by mystic magic,

Chang'd by Time, the great magician,
He who decks "stone walls with mosses,"
Wastes away the old Cathedral;
He the mighty warring conq'ror,
Heels of iron, breath of fire,
Crumbling, crushing, blasting all things,
Crumbling rocks, mouldering steeples;
Time, great Time, Almighty Presence,
Tender with the Fame of Poet,
Tender with most words of wisdom,
Making what seems nothing live long,
Cutting down things seeming greater.

Upon the sands of yesterday
Time had left few lasting furrows,
All was a fleeted yesterday;
Men and manners, all were changëd,
A new race ruled o'er the city,
Driven by the tide of Progress,
Rushing onward like a torrent,
Making "wild reverberations
As of thunder in the mountains."

North, East, West, South, new streets had ris'n,
Broader than the broad Old Market;
And people hurried to and fro,
Not in broughams drawn by horses,
But going along, fleet as Shaw-shaw,
Shawshaw, the long winged swallow,
Steaming, flying down the broad streets,
In cabs, driven by the fleet winds,
Kabibonokka the North wind,
Keewaydin, which is the Home wind;
Upon horses, fiery horses,
Steaming, puffing, snorting fireworks;

In the clouds were aerial cars,
Flying swift as the Omeme,
Omeme, the cooing pigeon—
Progress was not barr'd by turnpikes.

People liv'd, not in the bustle
All day long and through the night time—
The city was the mart of trade,
Great shop, with its mighty counters,
Hammers ringing, voices shouting ;
But, when night came o'er the toilers,
Gushkewou, the sombre darkness,
Then the workers went to Clifton,
Westbury, and old Shirehampton,
Thornbury, and little Keynsham,
Flying, steaming in their swift cars,
To enjoy the country pure air.
For they could not always live long
In the city fumes and stinkings ;
Suburbs were the spots to live in
And enjoy the leisure Sunday ;
City was to toil and strive in ;
Country to live, rest, and die in.

There were docks, at mouth of river,
Wider river than it now is,
Sparkling, gleaming in the sunshine,
Crowded with ten thousand steamers,
Gliding gently o'er the waters,
Gitchee Gumee, Big Sea Water,
Propell'd by steam, air and water,
Loaded by fast machinery,
Unloaded by mechanism.

There were docks throughout the city,

Bridg'd sometimes by mighty bridges
Upon which I stood bewilder'd,
Look'd upon as foolish creature,
Strange, mad being, not of those days,
Fit for some big wild asylum ;
Till I wishëd that I were not,
Long'd to jump into the river,
When a voice unto me whispered :—

See how vain are human wishes,
Human hopes and aspirations;
Men who liv'd a thousand years back
All are dead, past and forgotten,
Men of money not remembered
While the grave had scarce clos'd o'er them;
Now and then sweet words of wisdom,
Words of beauty, grand and thrilling,
And the names of they who utter'd
Thoughts that live and breathe for ever,
Still are reverenc'd, remember'd,
Though the haunts and costly villas
Of the wealthy, rich and pompous,
Churches, towers, steeples, town-halls,
All are moulder'd, crumbl'd, wither'd:
One grand instance will I give you—
Yon tall, monumental warning,
Tells of the death, in days long past,
Of the legendary life time
Of a sweet boy-poet singer,
Rich in mind though poor in pocket ;
Tells of wild and wayward legends,
Thoughts of sweet and touching beauty,
Which he utter'd, in his boy-days,
How men who were great in his days,

Fat and mighty money getters,
Petty scrawlers, snarling critics,
All are gone and quite forgotten,
While the name of the boy-poet
Is inscrib'd in golden letters—
Thus it reads on yon bright tower,
Monument to cheer the lowly
And induce the rich to good deeds
And tell us of mortality—
Thus it reads on yon bright tower
"To the Boy-Poet Chatterton."

Thus departed my strange vision,
"In the glory of the sunset
In the purple mists of evening;"
On the soft sweet-smelling hay mow
I awoke and heard the river,
Singing o'er the stony pebbles,
And I thought it might all come true,
All that strange bewild'ring dreaming;
And the river seem'd to say so,
The river that had for ages
Flown along its bed of pebbles;
Pointing back and pointing onwards
To the Past and to the Future,
"To the land of the Hereafter,"
To the land of Evermore!

THE STATUTE FAIR.

Hark, hark, the dogs do bark,
The beggars are coming to town,
Some in rags, some in tags,
Some in silken gowns.

If you have ever lived in the market square of a little country town, or were brought up in a small borough just large enough and grand enough to boast a mayor and corporation, you will perhaps understand something of our feelings when we tell you that the nursery stanza with which we commence this article has always been associated, in our mind, with Statute Fairs.

As a child we always listened to the "rhyme" with something like awe, when once a year there came into our little town a company of that ragged army of strollers—which keeps up a perpetual march, through the highways and byeways of England, to and from country fairs, village wakes, and races—including dry land sailors, kilted bagpipers, children on stilts, Punch's theatre, performing dogs following men in belcher neckerchiefs, tumblers, beggars bewailing fictitious ills, and all the other members of the highway fraternity—

Some in rags, some in tags,
Some in silken gowns.

As a boy they have given us many an hour's amusement, and as a man we hold them in much

higher estimation than do magistrates and churchwardens.

A country fair is full of curious interest as an exhibition of quaint English character, and after all, the porcelain of society need not be so very much scandalised at the silly amusements of the common clay when we find Tom Thumb's Talking Fish, Sensation Dramas, and Tight Rope Dancers attracting immense audiences from amongst the highest and noblest in the land.

The Statute Fair is a holiday which is long looked forward to with pleasure in country places, not only by the rural population, but also by the inhabitants of the town in which it is held. From the adjacent villages come streaming into town servants, male and female, dressed in their finest clothes, and masters and mistresses jogging along on all kinds of beasts of burthen, and in all manner of carts, gigs, and waggons. The servants whose periods of hiring terminate that day mostly want new masters, and the masters new servants, and so they all congregate at certain places in the market place, and stare at each other. When a farmer thinks he likes the looks of a man he opens a negotiation for his services, and the same process is adopted by the farmer's wife with regard to her assistants—only that in the latter case a great deal more examination, on both sides, seems to be considered necessary. Well, if the terms suit, and both parties are agreeable, a bargain is struck, and it is considered thoroughly binding by the acceptance, on the part of the servant, of what is called "the fastening penny," which is received and presented on the principle of the recruiting shilling.

The "fastening penny," however, is represented by any amount the hirer may think proper to give; "a waggon wheel," as the five-shilling-piece is denominated in some parts of the country, is generally considered a tolerably liberal "fastening penny." As soon as the money is accepted the engagement between the contracting parties is as binding, for a year, as if half a dozen lawyers had been employed to set forth the contract on as many skins of parchment. And all this matter-of-fact business goes on amidst the noise and bustle of the fair; yet it is seldom that mistakes of terms, or breaches of contract, arise out of the statute engagements, clumsy as the system certainly appears in these days of educational progress.

But it is towards night when the revelry of sight-seeing, the excitement of gingerbread buying, the fun of putting pennies into lotteries and getting nothing for your pains or your pence, are at their height. It is when the naphtha begins to blaze and splutter, filling the atmosphere with a sort of illuminated mist, that the fair is "in full go." The "pale moonlight," which Sir Walter Scott recommends as such a powerful adjunct to the beauty of Melrose Abbey, would be fatal to the effect of our fair. The darker the better for the glory of naphtha lamps and tinselled queens and magicians. It is quite invigorating to watch the fierceness of the competition between the rival showmen, although, with the neighbouring inhabitants, one would be glad if it were accompanied with a little less noise—"but no matter" (as the good old heavy dramatists say). First, there is the dwarf, perpetually ringing his bell out of the first storey front, and his proprietor

bawling the proportions of "the wonderfulest fe-nomenah as ever appeared afore the British public, at the low charge of *one* penny." Then there is the red-faced gentleman, belonging to the wax-work, who seems to be shouting himself into a fit of apoplexy, in his anxious desire to make known to those who are waiving betwixt "Daniel in the lions' den, as natural as life," and "the wonderfulest dwarf halive," that "this hexhibition of mechanical figures challenges the world for variety and perfectness, avin ad the honour of happearin afore nearly all the crowned eads of Europe." Then there is Bumwell's Royal Collection of Animated Nature, towering up into darkness, with florid delineations of lions, tigers, birds, and reptiles, occupied in the amusements of their native woods, or being mildly inspected, in a semicircle of cages, by the Queen of England, in a pink bonnet, and the Prince Consort, in a court uniform, with two children at his heels. Bumwell's have a band of music, which the proprietor of "The Temple of Magic" is endeavouring to drown with a drum and barrel organ, being assisted by the band belonging to the giant and the boa constrictor—two trombones, a cornet, and a drum, who appear to be fully determined to drown everybody else or perish in the attempt. Whenever the cornet evinces the slightest uncertainty in the melody the first trombone dashes in and carries it off in triumph, the cornet sinking into a humble second, until the trombone has soared so high that the natural compass of his instrument stops his further flight, and then to his rescue comes in the cornet, with a double shake and warbling variation,

that is quite refreshing to the crowd below, who, tantalised by the half-drawing of a curtain exhibiting a sort of perpetual Catherine wheel spinning before a piece of looking glass, dash up the steps, and disappear behind two very green doors, ornamented with a very bright knocker. In the midst of these exhibitions, surrounded by a host of other equally noisy establishments, including peep-show delineations of Waterloo and the latest murder, is situated the booth of the "Nottingham Pet," a gentleman of somewhat short stature and battered aspect, who, elevating himself on a temporary platform, proclaims, in a husky voice, "You've the real thing here, gents—no infernal drums an trumpets to dror yer in, and ease yer of yer money—its the nut—the *nut*, gents, wot you has here in all its perfectshun—the nut, gents, *the* nut." This choice oration is accompanied by beating the head every time that piece of human anatomy is alluded to as the nut, and by the time the "pet" has exhausted his speech, and made himself much hoarser than when he commenced it, another of the same calibre of "nuts," and rejoicing in a similar "gin and fog" organ, invites "them as lovs the noble skience of self-defence" to lose no time in witnessing "a set-to atween the renowned Nottenam Pet, which is backd for a undred pund aside to fight the 'Tipton' and 'Jimmy, the Black,' which as had the honner of oldin the champion belt of the light weights, and which is also backd to fight a battle in the ensooin munth."

Leaving "the real thing," with its gloves, and its flat and bloody noses, we come to something of

a more imaginary character—"The Theatre Royal." The performers, in a variety of stage costume, are pacing the platform, and just as we arrive at the steps it is announced that the company will have "one dance at the exterior of the house prior to the commencement of Shakspeare's *im-mortal* tragedee of King Richard the Third, by the whole strength of the company, after which a Grand Magical, Tragical, Comical, Laughable Pantomime, —only twopence to the Gallery;" all this being accompanied with the most positive assurance that there will be only three or four more performances this evening, and that the house is elegantly illuminated, and heated with a patent stove. Thereupon the whole strength of the company—a humpbacked individual in a black velvet coat and feathers; two or three royal looking swells of a past age, in various stages of seediness; two children (who were shortly to be murdered in the tower), shivering in scanty garments and buckled shoes; and divers ladies, in long robes of all colours, together with short robes for the pantomime of the most gauzy and gaudy character, begin to dance; and after a few fantastical turns, the men severally fold their arms, the women raise their dresses, and, at the pantomimic beckoning of a clown, who tumbles head over heels across the stage, and then runs back again, they all disappear to commence their interpretation of Shakspeare's "Life and death of King Richard the Third."

Following the actors inside—as we did only a short time since—we were somewhat astonished to find that the orchestra was made up out of the performers, who, whenever it came to their turn to

appear, leaped over the footlights, struck their attitudes, made their speeches, and, as soon as possible, returned to their orchestral duties. Thus it appeared somewhat paradoxical to find some royal personage, immediately after being murdered, quietly enter the orchestra and play a fiddle accompaniment to the murder of the two Princes in the Tower. But we soon got used to these incidents, especially when we found the tragedy condensed into a couple of acts, and about half a dozen scenes, into which were thrust as many horrors as possible, including, of course, a terrible broad-sword encounter between Richard and Buckingham, as to the result of which the audience exhibited considerable partizanship, urging the two on with a variety of encouraging remarks. The scene had no sooner fallen on the panting "corpse" of Richard than that royal personage, seeing us in the two seats petitioned off as the boxes, came straight to where we sat, and expressed a hope that, for the credit of the travelling drama, we would not form our judgment of the company by what we had seen that day, as it was impossible to do justice to any legitimate play when it was necessary to perform a matter of a dozen tragedies, and as many farces and pantomimes, in the course of one day, as they were accustomed to do at fair times. We assured the courteous manager of our willingness to make every allowance, and accordingly waited to see the Clown twist about his friend "Joey," half kill a policeman, and make love to a Columbine, who was perpetually in company with a gentleman dressed in tight patchwork. These several feats being accomplished we departed, leaving one of the rising

generation lighting his pipe at the footlights, and Columbine and two other females, one in a highly interesting situation, bending themselves into a variety of shapes, with Harlequin standing on his head on the Clown's shoulders, and Pantaloon lighting a pan of blue fire at the wing, prior to taking his position in the "Grand Finale."

Getting a little way from the noise of the shows, we find ourselves in a maze of stalls, shooting galleries, roundabouts, swinging boats, bazaars, and "good stuff" booths, and, wherever we go, gingerbread and nuts seem to be the staple luxuries; indeed the fair is redolent of gingerbread, and in whatever other occupation they may be engaged, girls and boys, and men and women, are all cracking nuts, which are offered and sold to them as "real Barsalonies." Here a group throngs round a ballad singer, who sells his ditties by the yard. Close by, a bustling individual, with a sort of dumb clock, painted in stripes of red and blue and black and green, with a perpetually moving long hand, cries, "Now, gents, try yer luck again—faint heart never won fair lady—nothin ventur, nothin win—one down, who make's two—I'll bet even on the red;" and smock-frocked fellows gape at his volubility, and volubility pockets their pence. In close proximity, all who are suffering from pains in the back or bowels, nervous debility, spasms, wind, the black vomit, gout, or any other complaint, are requested to try the infallible pill, the recipe of which was procured from an officer in her Majesty's Army, who had been in the habit of curing whole regiments with the recipe, and who had only been induced to part with the same on account of the

humble individual who now possessed it having saved that officer's life when set upon by four Sikhs in the great Sikh war—two night and morning would be found efficacious in all disorders of the blood, and the charge for one box was about one-third of the price which would have to be paid for a single pill in any respectable druggist's in town—and why ? because the seller was not compelled to pay rent and taxes, and because he gave the public the benefit of his not keeping a large shop with numerous assistants. These arguments are found to be irresistible, especially with the women, as are, with numerous men, the jokes of "Cheap Jack," who is continually trying to break a joiner's saw, and expressing it, as his opinion, that nobody ever saw such a saw as that saw, and that if the axe he now held in his hand—and which he would neither ask five, four, three, two, nor one shilling for, but would sell at once at the low and ruinous figure of ten pence—was placed at the root of a tree that night, the timber would be found felled and ready for carting the next morning. Above all this you hear a mingled hubbub of cries, made up of "three a penny, three a penny," "taste em and try em afore you buy em," "try your weight, gents, try your weight," "strong leather laces," "only a penny in the lucky bag," "the real Turkey rhoobarb, only four pensh de ounsh, two-pensh de half ounsh, and as low as a penny de qvarter of an ounsh," "now, my little dears, who rides, who rides ?" "real Grantham gingerbread, only sixpence a pound," "here you are, the real brandy snap, the real brandy snap,"

"We are poor folk from Manchesteer,
An we've go'ttn no work to do,"

and a hundred other inducements to buy or give, interspersed now and then with a deep bass entreaty to "Pity the poor blind."

It is a treat to watch the children, amongst all the noise and glitter, and to see them struggling home under their load of toys, blowing their trumpets and beating their drums, and talking about their "fairings," and bedaubing their cheeks with the everlasting gingerbread; and to see the rough country lovers taking their sweethearts to the shows, and buying them nuts; and to see the tradesmen busy in their shops, round the market place; and to hear, as you may sometimes, the parish bells ringing joyous peals, that fill up the smallest lull in the noise of the fair, and make the holiday clamour complete.

Such are the chief features of the Statute Fair—an institution which will doubtless ere long be numbered with the things of the past. For it is deemed but a cumbersome and degrading system for the hiring of agricultural labour, and we must confess that, with all its picturesque incidents, like the work of some old Dutch master, when stripped of its varnish we discover accessories which time and custom have clothed in a coat of comparative obscurity. If we look deeper into the painting, investigate the background, and rub away the varnish, we find men and women reeling through the streets in helpless drunkenness, and Vice, with all her demoralising train, holding high carnival in the market-place. We also see, it is argued, the fair turned into a sort of English slave market, in which our fellow creatures are bought and sold, for certain periods, to the highest bidders

—a fact which is somewhat incompatible with the advanced notions of the age in which we live. Therefore the institution is doomed. Before it is superseded, however, we have a few words to say upon the movement for its suppression.

Speakers and writers will generally agree with Sir John Pakington, who recently described these statutes as "clumsy and inconvenient contrivances with regard to the object of engaging agricultural labourers, while, on the other hand, with regard to the other branch of the question, there could be no doubt that these gatherings had a very demoralising tendency. He believed it to be the fact that very bad and infamous characters were in the habit of attending these statutes, and that they imposed on the employers of labour, and inflicted great moral injury on those who came to be hired." Of late these evils seem to have become more and more apparent, and at last we have an earnest movement to blot out of the national statute book the ancient Statute Fair.

There are, however, some important considerations, which we would strongly impress upon the movers in this social reform. First, the old machine must not be thrown aside until the new one, which is to supersede it, is fixed and in working order. In the next place, the employers of agricultural labour must be provided with another plan for obtaining the labour they require, and some arrangement must be made whereby the servant may dispose of his labour to the best advantage. It is proposed to accomplish this by a system of general registration throughout the rural districts, with offices centrally situated, where

masters and men may be in constant communication with each other. This plan, properly carried out, would doubtlessly be both effective and successful. But the most important of all considerations is one which is generally forgotten by the advocates of the abolition of "The Mop" (as the Statute Fair is called in the West), and it is *the* one which we desire to fix.

"There is a time to laugh," says King Solomon, and every succeeding poet and philosopher has extolled the benefits accruing to mankind from recreation and enjoyment. Now the mop is, with many of our hewers of wood and drawers of water, the principal, and, with some, the only holiday in the year. It is their "time to laugh." It is the time when they shake off their load of daily toil. It is the time when, for a few hours, the shackles of servitude fall from their shoulders, and leave them in the full enjoyment of freedom. It is the landmark in their year of travel at which they pause for breath and recreation, the oasis in the desert of labour, the sunshine after the cloud. Accompanied with our description of the fair these similes may appear too strong for the subject; but we can assure our readers, from a large experience of rural life, that they but inadequately depict the importance of this holiday to thousands of agricultural servants. The projectors of the new system should pause ere they take away this holiday without replacing it. The rural peasantry cannot afford to lose it—they "need all the counter-weights they can muster to balance the sad relations of life."

The rich, and we who inhabit large cities, can purchase amusement daily, and do not feel so much

the want of public holidays. It is very different with the poorer classes in the country, who would feel the loss of a holiday as keenly as a labouring citizen would feel the loss of a daily necessary. There are far too few holidays now-a-days, and especially holidays in which the rural classes may participate. The abolition of most of the old Church festivals has robbed the village green of many a gambol. Village rulers should have a care that the mechanical spirit of the age and the march of reformation do not sweep away the holidays now remaining. There must be recreation for young people of all classes, and recreation there will always be of some sort or other. Not even the greatest army of practical misanthropes that could be raised throughout the civilised globe could drive mirth and laughter from amongst us. Matter-of-fact as you may be, "fun will give you a forcible hug, and shake laughter out of you whether you will or not," and, after all, fun is the greatest of life's panaceas; it is a surer prolonger of life than the most cunning elixir that leech can administer. Let us not then narrow its circle, but since all classes must have recreation and amusement, let us set about increasing their holidays rather than diminishing them. There are, undoubtedly, abuses of recreation, and the mop-holiday is one of them. Purge it of its evils, but leave the holiday.

We can trace a time, far back amongst the dust of departed years and good old customs, when harvest time came to the tiller of the land as an annual festivity; when after the last load had left the stubble field, "the glowing landscape" presented

"A scene of jollity and social glee;"

when man and master, maid and mistress, joined in

happy demonstrations of joy, and did not forget to tender their thanks to "the Lord of the Harvest." At last the good old custom died. The harvest came as before. The sun rose on fields of golden wheat; the pale light of the harvest moon succeeded the crimson tints of the sunset as it did "when the minstrel-king wandered through the solitudes of Paran, or fields reposing at the feet of Carmel." But alas! the Harvest Home processions had vanished, and the sounds of "revelrie and joye" were no longer heard in the meadows. Time moves on his ceaseless course, until he makes another cycle in the whirpool of eternity, and once more we have our Harvest Home. It is a good old custom, and, we trust, will never again be allowed to fall into disuse.

We have introduced this little picture of a modern revival that, in setting it forth as an illustration of the character of some of the old customs which have somehow or other lain dormant for so many years, we may induce some good advocate of the abolition of the Statute Fair to rummage over the old calendars for a disused festival to replace it. In nearly every village in England there is some field or locality called The Butts, and it is pretty clear that the title has come down from the days when British bowmen exercised themselves with rigid perseverance in the national arm. The Butts are being revived in the shape of rifle targets. Could not some old precedent be found for festivals (in the place of Statute Fairs), which should combine some of the best features of the old English pleasure fair with the resuscitation of old-fashioned games and prize

shooting? It would be a grand consummation if our national amusements could be pressed into the service of our national advancement. The man who invents a new and better holiday as a substitute for the Statute Fair, will confer a boon upon the great rural population of England, and do a public service.

FIRE PICTURES.

On a winter's night, when the wind has been rattling your window-shutters, have you ever sat, with your feet on the fender, and made pictures in the fire? If you have, sit down with me at my fire. Some of the pictures, which I can trace there, may awaken associations powerful enough to kindle a set of fresh firelight fancies in your own imagination. If you have not, sit down all the same, and should all your efforts to see anything more than blazing coals and cinders prove fruitless, leave me to what you may be pleased to call my "stupid ravings." If all the men who button-hole you, and bore you in the streets, at the club, at your hotel, by your own fireside, would let you off as easily, you would have cause to be thankful.

But here I am with my fire and my fancies, and whether I have an audience or not, I will draw the curtains close, reduce the illuminating power of my lamp, and set about a particular series of fire pictures, which have the additional charm of being illustrations of boyish memories.

A nice, clear, ruddy fire it is too, bright and brilliant, but with enough of dark patches in it and unburnt coals to give variety to the pictures. There they are, the dear familiar scenes of old, rocks and hills, and dales and dells, and towns and cities, and villages, and everything and anything else I

choose to imagine the glowing cinders. There they are, trees, and towers, and spires ; and there's Baron Munchausen's horse hanging to the top of the steeple, the result of the sudden thaw. And yonder is Sinbad, the sailor, with the Old Man of the Sea on his back ; and the City of the Dead, people turned into stones, enchanted castles, enchanted palaces—the whole of the Arabian Nights condensed into a living, moving story, illustrated by a burning coal, and surrounded by a thousand happy associations. Close by are Napoleon crossing the Alps, Moscow burning, Captain Cook attacked by savages, and the red, burning, smoke-clouded Field of Waterloo: "Up, Guards, and at 'em!" Oh! how well I remember the old pensioner, who used to smoke so much tobacco, drink so much beer, and tell such grand stories of the great fight—about Shaw, the Life Guardsman—forming into squares, and the glorious coming of Blucher. How happy I was ; how I expressed my determination never to be anything but a soldier ; how we boys used to play at French and English ; how I never would be on the French side; how the French used to be twice as numerous as the English ; and how the smallest number used always to be the conquerors notwithstanding. Stop! There's Nelson and the Battle of Trafalgar, at which the old Captain, who lived in the house with the two cannons in front, close by the school, lost his leg. Oh, what a glorious story that was! And the song about it:—

"'Twas in Trafalgar's bay."

No! I would not be a soldier; I would plough the briny ocean and fight until I was an Admiral.

What is that peculiarly-shaped bit of fuel in the centre of the fire? Robinson Crusoe. Yes, it is poor Robinson, all alone by himself, without a soul to speak to or cheer him up, liable to be attacked by savages, and with no prospect of ever seeing his dear native land again. And yet I used to think I should like to have been Robinson, even before I had read so far as his sail with Friday. What's the next picture ? Gulliver, with an army marching through his legs. That monster piece of coal, towering above the hollow I made just now with the poker, is Gulliver, and there are the pigmy horses and the palace where Gulliver put the fire out. Down it goes ! I thought that lump would fall. Never mind, it is Gulliver again ; Gulliver at Brobdignag. What a fright I was in, I remembered, when the dwarf, Glumdaclitch, pushed him into the marrow-bone which the Queen had left on her plate. The attack of the wasps, too, and the monkey. Wouldn't I like to have twisted that monkey's neck ! All this was accompanied by the inward hope that if ever I was wrecked it might be on the shores of Lilliput, in preference to Brobdignag, or the land of the Honyhunms. Now I see Daniel in the lions' den ; Shadrach, and his companions in the fiery furnace ; the Pillar of Fire which went before the children of Israel ; the parting of the waters of the Red Sea ; David killing Goliath ; and I remember well vowing a determination to say my prayers—and look towards the East, too, if I thought proper—for all the Kings in Christendom. Next, come incidents in the Pilgrim's Progress, and I see myself commencing a pilgrimage along the long white road over the hills which shut in the world of my youth.

Now I will stir the fire and change the pictures, as I used to turn the kaleidoscope and watch its vivid, varying combinations. Here are a new set of fancies, bright ones, too, most of them. Ivanhoe and the Swineherd, knights with waving plumes, monks with sombre cowls. There are the ancient cavaliers in all their grand array of mail, and yonder is the tournament. That etherial looking bit of ash, which is about to fall, is the beautiful Jewess in the gallery of spectators, and that blackish coal, on the other side, the strange knight who overthrows everybody. Then there's Marmion, Lord of Fontenaye—

"Who checks at me to death is dight;"

and, close by, is the Last Minstrel, telling his long changing tale of chivalry, which I follow through a thousand changing scenes. Then comes the Last of the Moichans.

What a host of remembrances crowd upon me at the sight of this last fire picture! At the last school I went to we used to spend the Saturday half holiday in being North American Indians. We had willow bows and lances, wood arrows, the timber for the latter being obtained by the coach-maker's son. We had wooden scalping knives, and tufts of dry grass fastened on our heads for scalps, which were to be taken and slung in the belts of the conquerors. We went on "trails." We lay in ambush. We sent out scouts. We crouched beneath hedgerows, and went on long happy expeditions through great woods and luxuriant mowing grass. We called each other fanciful names, and most of us were chiefs. I was Hawk Eye, and a long-legged fellow, who came from

a farm in the country, and brought a greasy lunch in a greasy bag every day, was the Bounding Elk. The red-headed son of the tallow chandler was something else—the Fox, I think—and he used to taunt me by saying that he never wrapped a Mingoe in his blanket. How well I remember once, when out on an expedition against the tribe to which the Fox belonged, I shot him, and he would neither die nor be scalped; how we fought in real earnest; how Hawk Eye's nose bled, and how the Fox's nose bled too; how Hawk Eye obtained the contested tuft of grass notwithstanding; how the two great chiefs made friends, and smoked the pipe of peace (a piece of ignited cane); and how the two tribes came to the unanimous decision that, in future, all who would not die and be scalped fairly, when hit with an arrow, should not be allowed to go on another war trail, but should remain at home, in inglorious ease, with the squaws.

To the fire again. At the back of the grate I see Peter the Great at work in a dockyard; Cromwell clearing out the British House of Commons; Hans, of Iceland, drinking out of a skull; and the Witches in Macbeth performing their mystic dance around the cauldron. And now comes up in the firelight the little country theatre, where first I saw Ophelia, a young lady in white muslin, and Hamlet, a melancholy individual in black hose. If it is not a sacrilege on his memory to imagine the likeness in that dull, rotten piece of coal, I could fancy that dying ember near the bottom bar like the paintings of the Great Bard himself. With the thought, what a crowd of pictures flit across my brain, and people the fire-lit

room—fays and fairies, kings and queens, lords and ladies, dukes and earls, soldiers and serving-men. But, brightest of all the shadowy forms, stand out the burly Falstaff, the hump-backed Richard, the philosophic Hamlet, the sweet Ophelia, the bully Bottom, the nimble Puck, the merry Wives, the loving Juliet, the baffled Cardinal, the spiteful Jew, the pretty Jessica. I see them all, and many more, and they mingle together, in fancy, until they seem to make a play of their own, and enact it for me in the firelight.

A few cinders fall, and fresh combinations are made between the bars, where a monster "stranger" flaps and flutters, as if it waited to be clapped off, to tell its supernatural tale of the advent of a visitor. But I will not stir whilst I am so happy with the red glowing coals beyond. The one nearest the second bar, with a small flame in the centre, is certainly like a fire temple. Yes, and there's a crowd of Ghebers at the burning shrine, and now I see turbaned heads in the fire, and now the sudden blaze bursts o'er Osman's sea, and Hafed is no more. The Giaour lying on a hard couch, and pointing to the "blood upon that dinted sword;" Evangeline amongst the hay-makers; Pompei, and the burning Mountain; and a hundred other book-thoughts, made into fire pictures, follow on, each with its happy thoughts, each with its pleasant memories.

Now back again I go to earlier years, and see myself standing on a wall, with a loving arm around me, watching the first railway train that appeared in my little world at home. The picture leads me to another. That bit of half-lit coal at

the back of the fire is a Park where I used to play as a boy; and, by the side of the line of railway which skirts the little wood at the bottom, stands George Stephenson, the Great George, with his hands in his pockets, looking at the trains. "Does tha see that gentlemun yonder?" "Ah, au do." "Wele, that's him as fust made Puffin Billies." "Tha doesna say soa?" "But ou do." I see the two juveniles now, hear their simple chatter, and see the great man watching a railway train go roaring into the cutting below. Yes, and I remember (I was a very small fellow too) how he used to pretend to chase the boys when he found them birds-nesting in his grounds, and how he used, as I afterwards learnt, to laugh at the consternation of the youngsters, and tell of his own boyish freaks and boyish struggles.

Now I see a funeral, a grand country funeral, attended by the mayor and corporation, and a crowd of people. Everybody is sorry; workingmen are sorry; rich people are sorry; the shops are shut; we have a holiday at school, and the great passing bell, which hangs high up in the church steeple, is booming slowly and sadly, as though it was sorry too. And who is the man, think you, they are going to bury? The fine old gentleman I used to see watching the trains, the great engineer, who was pronounced mad when he dared to say that he could make a locomotive go at the rate of fifteen miles an hour!

There is another funeral now in the fire. I wish I had not seen the other. I meant only to see pleasant, happy, merry, joyous, sunny things. I must shake off the sombre thoughts which are

thickening around me, stir the fire, anything rather than grow sad. Still, still, I see the second funeral; it is less grand than the first, but there are dark nodding plumes, and the great bell is sobbing in the steeple, and people are weeping and looking sad, and (with watching the fire I suppose) my own eyes are growing very dim. Now the fire itself has disappeared ; but the funeral—there it is still. The mourners fill the room. I see the old solemn church, and the great cold pew, and hear the service for the dead, awakening the echoes of the ancient place, like a voice from the tomb. I see an open grave, and a child weeping bitterly by the newly-turned earth, and I hear the night cry of the orphan, weeping for her they have put in the ground.

The fire has no more pictures for me to-night. For you, dear reader, I may have more in the future.

THE END.